



Old World Bluestems

Image from Forages 5th Ed. CD Companion

Dichanthium spp. are best adapted to Southern Texas and parts of Mexico. Their rainfall requirements range from 10-30 inches per year depending on the variety. They all have fair to good drought tolerance.

Soils:

Old World bluestems grow best on finer textured soils such as loams, clay loams, sandy clay loams, silt loams, and clay. Most will grow on soils with a thin sandy layer over fine textured subsoil. Some varieties will grow adequately well on fertile sandy loams, but they do not grow well on sandy soils.

Most varieties can withstand periodic wetness, but they will not tolerate soils saturated for extended periods.

Their optimum pH range is similar to other grasses. No varieties will tolerate extremely alkaline or extremely saline soils, but all have fair salt tolerance and some varieties can grow adequately up to pH 8.0.

Use:

All varieties produce good grazing and hay with proper management. They respond well to nitrogen fertilizer when soil moisture is adequate. All varieties can tolerate occasional close grazing and once established, they will persist on adapted sites with low fertility. Old World bluestems will often produce better than other forage grasses with low fertility. All varieties tend to green up later than other warm season grasses, so over seeding with small grains is a likely option to provide early spring grazing.

BACKGROUND

The term "Old World" bluestem refers to a complex of imported warm season perennial grasses, which originated in Africa, Southern Asia, and the Middle East. Originally the Old World bluestems were classified in the same genus as many of the native bluestems, Andropogon. Today the Old World bluestems are classified as either belonging to Dichanthium spp. or Bothriochloa spp.

Some varieties of Bothriochloa spp. commercially available include; Caucasian bluestem, B. caucasica; Ganada bluestem, B. ischaemum var. ischaemum; King Ranch bluestem, B. ischaemum var. songarica; Plains bluestem, B. ischaemum var. ischaemum; WW-Spar bluestem, B. ischaemum var. ischaemum; WW B. Dahl, B.bladhii; and WW-Iron Master, B. ischaemum var. ischaemum.

Some varieties of Dichanthium spp. commercially available include; Angleton bluestem, D. aristatum; Gordo bluestem, D. aristatum; Kleberg bluestem, D. annulatum; Medio bluestem, D. aristatum; and Old World T-587, Dichanthium spp. Bothriochloa spp. blend.

ADAPTATION AND USE

Climate:

Many of the Old World bluestems are extensively adapted throughout Texas, however it is generally said that the Bothriochloa spp. are best adapted to the northern half of Texas and Oklahoma, while the

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