

Comparing Native Grass Pastures

These native grass species can produce the following results.

Production (t/ha)

Weeping grass (*Microlaena stipoides*) 1.7 to 7.4

Wallaby grass (*Austrodanthonia* spp.) 1.8 to 7.8

Redgrass (*Bothriochloa macra*) 3.8 to 10.4

Windmill grass (*Chloris ventricosa*) 2

Common wheat grass (*Elymus scaber*) 3.4 to 7

Kangaroo grass (*Themeda triandra*) 1.6 to 8.3

Digestibility (%)

Weeping grass (*Microlaena stipoides*) 58 to 72%

Wallaby grass (*Austrodanthonia* spp.) 55 to 69%

Redgrass (*Bothriochloa macra*) 58 to 69%

Windmill grass (*Chloris ventricosa*) 33 to 72%

Common wheat grass (*Elymus scaber*) 63 to 71%

Kangaroo grass (*Themeda triandra*) 62 to 68%

Cocksfoot 61 to 67%

Phalaris 66 to 68%

Crude Protein(%)

Weeping grass (*Microlaena stipoides*) 11 to 21%

Wallaby grass (*Austrodanthonia* spp.) 10 to 18%

Redgrass (*Bothriochloa macra*) 9 to 13%

Windmill grass (*Chloris ventricosa*) 8 to 15%

Common wheat grass (*Elymus scaber*) 14 to 17%

Kangaroo grass (*Themeda triandra*) 8 to 11%

Cocksfoot 11 to 16%

Phalaris 13 to 18%

Reference:

Native Seeds, Native grass pastures, www.nativeseeds.com.au/



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Microlaena Stipoides (Weeping Grass)



©Microlaena stipoides
Photographer: Manley, G. ANBG Photo No.: ara.293

Microlaena Potential

Microlaena stipoides was identified as a promising candidate for perennial grain crop on the basis of seed size and wide distribution. *Microlaena* has large seeds, approaching that of commercial rice varieties, with larger examples being five to six milligrams. It also has indeterminate flowering in that many types will continue to produce seed throughout the summer, provided soil water is available. *Microlaena* has a wide geographic distribution throughout southern Australia particularly in the coastal and tableland regions of eastern Australia and the medium to high rainfall areas of southern and western Australia.

Seed production in *Microlaena* compares very favorable with introduced perennial grass species and far exceeds documented yields of other native grasses. Research suggests that there is sufficient variation within *Microlaena* to make selections for higher yielding lines.

While the grain yields of *Microlaena* is unlikely to be as high as that of an annual crop—the national average wheat yield in Australia has ranged from 1140 to 2100 kg/ha over the last decade (Australian Wheat Board 2003) - it compares favorably with the yields of other native and exotic perennial grasses.

A number of studies are currently underway for further assessment of the potential of *Microlaena* as an economically viable dual purpose grain and grazing crop. Continued consideration of its grain to determine its suitability for use in food products for human consumption and stock feed.



Weeping grass seed

Common Names:

Weeping rice grass, Meadow rice grass or Rice grass.

Distribution:

Weeping grass is an Australian native grass which is widely distributed throughout the damper zones of eastern Australia from Cape York to Tasmania. It is also found in the wetter districts of South Australia and in the south west of Western Australia.

Description:

Weeping grass is a cool season perennial grass which produces year round green growth. It spreads by short scaly rhizomes under the soil. There are many different forms that vary in height, leaf width and growth habit. The seedheads are weeping and ripen from December to May. The seeds have awns up to 20mm long that are rough and the seeds tend to cling together making them difficult to handle.

Uses:

Because of its attractive appearance, its persistence and high grazing value, as well as its tolerance of shade and acid soils, this grass has a wide range of uses. It is suitable for use on roadsides, municipal parks and gardens requiring little maintenance, domestic lawns, parts of golf courses, pastures in acid soil of moderate to high rainfall, revegetation in conjunction with other native grasses and river and streams edges to reduce erosion.

Soils:

Suited to a wide range of soil types with a pH of less than 6.0. Weeping grass has a preference to acidic soils.

Tolerances:

High drought tolerance, High frost tolerance, Medium salt tolerance, Shade tolerant.



Ovens Weeping grass LIG 183



Shannon Weeping grass



Bremmer Weeping grass LIG 704

Varieties of Weeping grass

Griffin

Griffin Weeping grass is ideal for high quality lawn and for passive recreation. Once established, it is low maintained and requires minimal watering. It grows in shade. This variety was developed by the University of New England.

Ovens (LIGULE 183)

This grass was developed by the NSW Department of Land And Water Conservation (DLWC). Ovens Weeping grass was selected in the wheatsheep zone near NSW—Victorian border and has considerable heat and drought tolerance. It is a larger plant which produces considerable dry matter of high grazing quality.

Bremmer (LIGULE 704)

It originated in the medium rainfall zone where grazing is the principal activity. Bremmer Weeping grass is an upright plant with medium textured leaves and a strong tolerance to acid soil conditions.

Burra

Burra Weeping grass was developed by Native Seeds and should be available in 2005. It is a versatile all round grass with a deep green colour. It has high drought tolerance and is tolerant of acid soils. Burra is well suited for lawns or for revegetation.

Shannon

This variety was bred by the University of New England for vegetation and pasture applications. It has performed well on very shallow soils under exposed conditions. It grows well in higher altitude situations having performed extremely well in the higher test sites of north east Victoria, but also persists well at lower altitudes. Native seeds should have seed available of this variety in 2006.

Reference:

Native Seeds, Weeping grass, www.nativeseeds.com.au/
Australian Landcare June 2005, Perennial grain crop, Research identifies potential of a native grass for grain production, pg 10.
NSW DPI, www.ojdinfo.nsw.gov.au