

**A Conservation Plant Released by The Natural Resources Conservation Service  
Los Lunas Plant Materials Center, Los Lunas, New Mexico**

# 'El Vado'

## spike muhly

### *Muhlenbergia wrightii* Vasey ex J.M. Coult.

El Vado is a cultivar of spike muhly released in 1973 by the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service Los Lunas Plant Materials Center, New Mexico State University Los Lunas Agricultural Science Center, Colorado State University, and the New Mexico Department of Transportation.

#### **Description**

El Vado spike muhly is a warm-season, perennial bunchgrass. The plants are light green in color and have stems 8 to 20 inches tall. Leaf sheaths are purple near the stem joints. Leaves are 3 to 6 inches long and 1/8 inch wide. Short underground stems or rhizomes are found on some plants.



*'El Vado' spike muhly seed heads.*

#### **Source**

The original El Vado spike muhly seed was collected west of Park View, New Mexico in 1958. El Vado spike muhly was superior or equal in seed production, seedling vigor and forage production in almost every comparison to other spike muhly entries at Clovis, Las Cruces and Los Lunas, New Mexico.

#### **Conservation Uses**

Spike muhly is a good soil binder. El Vado can be used for soil stabilization and revegetation where vegetation has been reduced or destroyed by surface mining, construction activities, brush control, or fires. Spike muhly is palatable to all classes of domestic livestock. It is excellent forage for deer and elk throughout the year.

#### **Area of Adaptation and Use**

El Vado spike muhly is adapted to a wide variety of soils in the upper pinyon-juniper and ponderosa pine vegetation zones at elevations from 3,800 to 9,000 feet (1000 to 3000 m) in Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, and Nevada. It is most abundant in meadows or park-like openings of forested areas.

#### **Establishment and Management for Conservation Plantings**

For rangeland plantings, a seeding rate of one pound per acre of pure live seed between January and May is recommended. Climates with warmer winters may prefer seeding January-March, while cooler winter climates might prefer March-May.

#### **Ecological Considerations**

Diseases of this variety have not been observed in rangeland or seed production plantings. El Vado spike muhly is naturally resistant to wheat curl mite which produces a seed head gall. This gall moderately-to-severely reduced seed yields on all other spike muhly strains at most test locations. Four species of stem-boring insects have been found in El Vado spike muhly plants, but their effect on seed yield has not been determined.

#### **Seed and Plant Production**

Planting date varies with location, but the seed should generally be planted during mid-spring or late July. Annual weeds are usually less competitive in late July plantings. Recommended planting rate is 2 to 3 pounds per acre (2.2 to 3.3 kg/ha) of pure live seed. Plant seed 0.25 inch (6 mm) deep in rows 30 to 40 inches (80 to 100 cm) apart so there is room to irrigate and cultivate if needed. If the seed rows are placed on beds or beside corrugations, and if the field is properly leveled and

smoothed, the new plantings can be irrigated without covering the seed with water. This is especially important in establishing a stand in soils susceptible to surface crusting. A soil test is recommended as an aid in determining fertilizer needs. However, experience may be the best guide. In lieu of other guides, annual fertilizer rates of 80 pounds per acre of available nitrogen may be used under irrigation. Seed matures in October or early November at Los Lunas, New Mexico. A small-grain combine can be used to harvest the seed.

At Los Lunas, El Vado spike muhly produced a four-year average yield of 150 pounds per acre of pure live seed in one field, and a two-year average of 116 pounds per acre in another planting. Unlike many grass species, mature plants of El Vado are resistant to seed shattering. This is an asset to seed production.

#### **Availability**

For conservation use: El Vado spike muhly is commercially available.

For seed or plant increase: Foundation seed is produced by the Los Lunas Plant Materials Center and limited amounts of foundation El Vado spike muhly seed are available to seed growers.

#### **For More Information**

For more information on 'El Vado' Spike muhly, please contact Los Lunas Plant Materials Center 1036 Miller Road, Los Lunas, NM 87031, Tele: 505-865-7340, FAX: 505-865-5163

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/plant-materials/nmpmc>



#### **Citation**

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For additional information, contact your local USDA Service Center, NRCS field office, or Conservation District <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/>, and visit the PLANTS Web site <http://plants.usda.gov> or the Plant Materials Program Website. <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/plant-materials>

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