

'DURAR'

hard fescue

Festuca brevipila Tracey



Figure 1. Durar hard fescue seed production field at the Pullman, WA, Plant Materials Center

Durar hard fescue is a cultivar released in 1949 by the USDA-NRCS Pullman Plant Materials Center in cooperation with Agricultural Experimental Stations located at Pullman, Washington and Moscow, Idaho.

Description

Durar is a moderately tall, semi-erect, and densely tufted introduced perennial bunchgrass with fine leaves. It has abundant basal leaves that are long, narrow, and coarse. Durar is long-lived, persistent, and competitive with other grasses and weeds once established. It is closely related to Chewing's fescue but more uniform, drought resistant and shade tolerant. Stems can grow 30 inches long in good growing conditions. Durar hard fescue is not as hardy as sheep or Idaho fescues but is easier to establish and propagate.

Source

Seed was originally collected by Virgil Hawk in 1934 from an old planting on the Eastern Oregon Livestock Experiment Station at Union, Oregon. It was developed by re-selection at the Plant Materials Center at Pullman, WA, in 1949. Durar performance has been compared with Chewing's fescue, creeping red fescue, sheep fescue, Idaho fescue, and other fine-leaved fescues. It was tested in pure stand seedings, mixtures with alfalfa, and with other grasses.

Durar was selected for its good seed production, disease resistance, competitive ability, durability, longevity, leafiness, and heavy fibrous root production.

Conservation Uses

Durar hard fescue is primarily used for ground cover and soil protection on areas highly susceptible to erosion including roadsides, ditch banks, airports, skid trails, ski slopes, campsites, and burned over forested areas. It has a tremendous root system that produces more biomass than the above ground biomass. Durar has been known to produce up to 19,000 lb of air-dry roots per acre in the top 8 inches of soil. Once established, Durar withstands moderate traffic.

Area of Adaptation and Use

Durar hard fescue is adapted to a wide range of climate and soil conditions in areas of 15 to 30 inches of annual precipitation. Generally, it will grow wherever native Idaho fescue occurs. In timbered areas, it is adapted to ponderosa pine and lodgepole sites. Durar grows best in medium to fine textured soils that are well drained. It will not tolerate wet or saline-alkali soils however, it does well on low fertility sites and in shaded areas. Seeds shatter and volunteer readily. It can be used as cover in shelterbelts, windbreaks, and woodlots. Durar hard fescue effectively suppresses weeds and delays their invasion and expansion.

Establishment and Management for Conservation Plantings

Durar hard fescue should be drill seeded no more than ¼ inch deep into a well-prepared weed-free seed bed in late fall or early spring at 5-7 Pure Live Seed (PLS) pounds per acre. Broadcast seed at 10 PLS lbs per acre and follow with harrow or raking. Germinating seedlings are susceptible to soil crust. On steep banks and critical erosive areas, mulch and other erosion-control measures are recommended. There are 565,000 seeds per pound.

During the first year of establishment seedlings may only grow 1-2 inches in diameter, however, fertilization is not recommended as this may stimulate weed growth. A newly seeded area should not be subjected to traffic or use. Weed control and seedling protection are critical during the first year but competitiveness is observed in the second year of growth.

Ecological Considerations

No significant pest problems have been recorded.

Seed and Plant Production

Seed production is best adapted to row seedings 30 to 36 inches apart using 2 PLS lbs per acre. Seed production fields should be fertilized with up to 20 lb of nitrogen fertilizer per acre at establishment. The planting should be kept as weed free as possible. Seed should be harvested with a combine at dough stage, which is about July 15th in Pullman, WA. Once plantings are established, side dressing rows with 40 lb of nitrogen in the fall will help insure and maintain good yields and high-quality seed.

Availability

For conservation use: Durar hard fescue is available from the commercial seed market. Durar is increased on a limited generation basis with three recognized classes of seed-breeder, foundation and certified.

For seed or plant increase: Breeder seed is produced and maintained by the USDA-NRCS Plant Materials Center in Pullman, WA. Seed produced from certified seed is not eligible for certification.

Citation

Release Brochure for Durar hard fescue (*Festuca brevipila*). 2022. USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, Pullman Plant Materials Center. Pullman, WA.

For additional information about this and other plants, please 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 Web site <<http://www.plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov>>

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