



# 'Norcoast' Bering Hairgrass

## *Deschampsia beringensis*

### Uses: Revegetation and Forage Throughout Alaska

#### Background Information

Bering hairgrass— *Deschampsia beringensis*—is a perennial bunchgrass with an open flowering seed spike. The spikelets are yellowish-green.

Its leaves are robust and mostly basal, causing a tufted appearance. The branches on the flowering head are open and hairlike.

It has a good to excellent forage value for livestock (fair for wildlife).



Map from Hultén, 1968.  
Used with the permission of Stanford University Press.

#### Distribution

*Deschampsia beringensis* is found along southern muddy shores in Alaska (Hultén, 1968).

#### Growth

Bering hairgrass is a cool season bunch grass. It will grow in most any soil, although in the wild it is usually found in wet or boggy situations.

*Deschampsia beringensis* adapts to a wide range of conditions. It is tolerant of moist and salty conditions.

#### Cultivar: 'Norcoast'

Plant Introduction Number: 562652

'Norcoast' is a cultivar developed by the University of Alaska Fairbanks Agricultural Experiment Station and released in 1981. The original seed was collected from tideland flat areas in the Cook Inlet region of Alaska (Mitchell, 1985).

Developed for forage and revegetation for northern climates, 'Norcoast' is recommended by the Alaska Department of Transportation as the main grass component in seed mixes for Southcentral, Southwestern, Southeast, and Western soils (DOT, 2001).

'Norcoast' is susceptible to injury from snow mold. Because of this 'Norcoast' is recommended for revegetation efforts in coastal regions but not where snow mold is a problem (Mitchell, 1985).

'Norcoast' Bering Hairgrass is recognized in breeder, foundation, registered, and certified seed classes.

Breeder and foundation seed is maintained by the Alaska Plant Materials Center. Registered and certified seed is available through the Alaska Seed Growers, Inc.

**'Norcoast' out-performs many other grass species in grass variety trials for revegetation.**

[www.dnr.state.ak.us/ag/ag\\_pmc.htm](http://www.dnr.state.ak.us/ag/ag_pmc.htm)

**Alaska Plant Materials Center**

*Serving Alaska's needs in production of Alaska native plants*

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## 'Norcoast' for Alaska Revegetation Purposes

'Norcoast' bering hairgrass grows well in waterlogged soils. When a revegetation project occurs in an area where the soil is saturated much of the time, a combination of 'Norcoast', 'Egan' sloughgrass, and 'Sourdough' bluejoint would be effective (Wright, 1992).

'Norcoast' is a medium to tall grass with narrow leaves. The composition of its leaves and flowering spike make for a hearty, beautiful part of a wet, coastal, or tundra reclamation.



*Deschampsia beringensis* seed  
~1,200,000 seeds per pound

'Norcoast' is also useful for wildlife. Many animals use it for food and shelter.



### To Produce 'Norcoast' Bering Hairgrass

'Norcoast' is a very hardy grass. Normal farm equipment is satisfactory for planting and maintaining it. For harvest, special combine sieve screens with round or slotted holes have worked best (Ross, 1989). 'Norcoast' can easily become contaminated with *Poa* species.

Planting times are dependent on the region, for instance in Southcentral plant seed between May 20 and July 10. Seeding too early in the spring may cause lower germination rates. Seeding too late in the fall may cause poor germination, spring soil fungi, or winter kill.

'Norcoast' seed germinates within two weeks depending on moisture, fertilization, viability, and weed competition.

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'Norcoast' production field at the  
Plant Materials Center in Palmer, Alaska.

### 'Norcoast' plant characteristics

<b>Wetness Tolerance</b>	<b>good</b>
<b>Acidity Tolerance</b>	<b>good</b>
<b>Seedling Vigor</b>	<b>good</b>
<b>Yield Potential</b>	<b>high</b>
<b>Longevity</b>	<b>long</b>
<b>Seed Production</b>	<b>moderate</b>
<b>Drought Resistance</b>	<b>poor</b>
<b>Winter Hardiness</b>	<b>moderate</b>
<b>Root System</b>	<b>bunch</b>
<b>Palatability</b>	<b>fair</b>

### References

Department of Transportation, 2001. *Alaska Highway Drainage Manual*. State of Alaska, Section 16.

Hultén, E. 1968. *Flora of Alaska and Neighboring Territories*. © by the Board of Trustees of the Leland Stanford Jr. University, Stanford University Press, Stanford.

Mitchell, W. 1985. *Registration of Norcoast Bering Hairgrass*, Crop Science Vol. 25, July—August, 1985, p. 708-709.

Ross, D.R. and E.J. Heyward, 1989. *Foundation Seed Production Technical Report 1977-1988*. Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Division of Agriculture, Plant Materials Center, Palmer, AK.

Wright, S. 1992. *Wetland Revegetation Projects in Alaska Using Adapted Species Having Commercially Available Seed*. Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Division of Agriculture, Plant Materials Center, Palmer, Alaska.