



# Black Rapids Germplasm field oxytrope

## *Oxytropis campestris*

### Selected Class Release “Natural”

Uses: Revegetation

Southcentral, Interior, Subarctic Alaska

#### Background Information

*Oxytropis campestris* is in the pea family. It grows wild in Alaska on gravel bars, rock outcrops, roadsides, alpine meadows and dry, sandy places (Walsh, 1974).

Its white-yellow flowers bloom in July. The flowers are located on their own stem. The seedpods are hairy and ripen unevenly in August.

Field oxytrope’s leaves come from the base of the plant. The leaflets are hairy, a distinguishing characteristic.

As a perennial legume, it has deep tap roots.



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

#### Distribution

According to Walsh (1974), *Oxytropis campestris* can be found throughout most of Alaska and the Yukon (south of the 68th parallel), in northern Europe, and throughout most of the northern U.S. It is circumboreal.

**Black Rapids Germplasm field oxytrope seed is maintained by the Alaska Plant Materials Center for commercial production.**

#### Black Rapids Germplasm Plant Identification Number: 9097735

Black Rapids Germplasm field oxytrope was collected in 1995 by Stoney Wright. Black Rapids is a glacial area on the Richardson Highway, north of Glennallen, Alaska (Wright, 2006). This mountainous, dry area is home to many winter-hardy plants.

This native legume is a Selected Class Release by the Alaska Plant Materials Center (PMC). This means it has been grown and harvested at the PMC and continues to exhibit excellent performance.

This legume is recommended for use in revegetation because not only are its seedlings vigorous and able to survive in dry areas, but they also fix nitrogen, enhancing the soil for future plant succession.

#### Interesting Note

Another common name for this plant is “Locoweed”. *Oxytropis campestris* accumulates the alkaloid *swainsonine*. Most of the time animals avoid eating it, but if they do, the alkaloid may cause them to act strangely (“loco” is Spanish for crazy). If the animals continue to eat it for long periods of time, they may die (Ralphs, et al., 2002).

**Alaska Plant Materials Center**  
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## Black Rapids Germplasm field oxytrope for Alaska Revegetation Purposes

Black Rapids grows easily and quickly in most situations, although slower than most grasses used for revegetation purposes. When the grass seed mix is spread evenly and Black Rapids is at least 5% by weight of the seed mix, this oxytrope should perform vigorously and eventually contribute to the revegetation results.

Its long inflorescence of white flowers adds to the visual appeal of roadside revegetation projects. A pea-like nitrogen fixer, it enriches the soil, contributing to a low-maintenance, long-lived, quality revegetation effort.

*Oxytropis campestris* seed.  
~237,040 seeds per pound



## To Produce Black Rapids

Conventional farm equipment is needed. A drill for seeding to a depth of ~1/4 inch is recommended. Soil should be well-drained.

Seeds germinate best with a light scarification. Seed may be sown in either fall or spring. A fall seeding replicates natural conditions in Alaska and tends to encourage faster germination (Hunt and Moore).

Cultural practices of light irrigation, cultivation of weeds, and a low nitrogen/high phosphorous fertilization should enhance growth.

When seed pods start cracking, harvest pods by hand (Hunt and Moore). Let pods dry, then clean brown seeds with a brush cleaner, followed by hand screens (Hunt and Moore).



*Black Rapids in production at the  
Alaska Plant Materials Center,  
Palmer, Alaska.*

**Peggy Hunt & Stoney Wright**  
State of Alaska  
Department of Natural Resources  
Division of Agriculture  
Plant Materials Center  
5310 S. Bodenbug Spur Rd.  
Palmer, AK 99645-9706  
Phone: (907) 745-4469

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