



'Service' Big Bluegrass

Poa secunda (*Poa ampla*)

Uses: Revegetation and Landscape Throughout Southern Alaska

Background Information

Big bluegrass, *Poa secunda*, is hardy in cold regions and is found in open meadows on dry, gravelly, or rocky soil (USDA, NRCS, 2004).

Plant taxonomists make life difficult for those of us that want to know which plant is which. Hultén (1968) described a grass called *Poa ampla*. He said it occurs naturally outside Alaska in the Yukon.

Now, taxonomists have clumped a few *Poa*'s into one species—*Poa secunda*. As a result, big bluegrass can be found in Alaska now. The synonyms for *Poa secunda* that Hultén described are: *Poa ampla*, *P. Canbyi*, *P. nevadensis*, and *P. stenantha*.

**Science is never static.
It is constantly changing!**



Map from Hultén, 1968.
Used with the permission of Stanford University Press.
Revised by the Alaska Plant Materials Center in 2004 to
reflect scientific name change/distribution.

Distribution

Poa secunda is native to Alaska. Big bluegrass can be found in the wild from Southeastern Alaska, through the Yukon to Nebraska.

**'Service' Big Bluegrass is
recognized as an informal release.**

**Seed is maintained by the
Alaska Plant Materials Center.**

Growth

Big bluegrass is a native bunch grass. It grows 18—24 inches tall with a characteristic blue color. It is a perennial and a cool season grass.

Poa secunda begins growth after snowmelt. Usually by mid-July it is mature with yellow, brown flower and seed spikes.

It is resistant to flattening (lodging). Yields of clean seed run about 200 pounds per acre.

Cultivar: 'Service'

Plant Introduction Number: 387931

'Service' was developed and released by The Alaska Plant Materials Center in 1989 (Wright, 1989).

'Service' big bluegrass is useful for its hardiness.

The original seed for 'Service' was collected along the Alaska Highway near Whitehorse, Yukon Territory, Canada.

'Service' has been evaluated by the Alaska Plant Materials Center since 1979.

'Service' big bluegrass is more vigorous and hardier in Alaskan climates than other *Poa secunda* cultivars (Wright, 1989).

Interesting Note

'Service' big bluegrass is named for Robert Service, an author well-known in Alaska for his writings of fictional gold rush characters.

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'Service' Big Bluegrass

'Service' for Alaska Revegetation and Landscape Purposes

'Service' big bluegrass thrives on various soils and moisture regimes. Although it is a bunch grass it has a competitive fibrous root system which enables it to compete well with weeds.

'Service' leaves are a bluish color. With its height of about 2 feet, it is attractive from a distance.

Other cultivars of big bluegrass are used in many of the western states. 'Service' can survive in Alaska's climate, whereas the other cultivars die.



'Service' Big Bluegrass seed
~1,046,960 seeds per pound

To Produce 'Service' Big Bluegrass

'Service' performs best on dry, gravelly, or rocky soil. Common farm equipment works well. Drill seed ~ 1/2 inch deep. Plant seed while ground temperatures are cool.

'Service' has a long lifespan. Cultivation of weeds will prolong "weed free" harvests for many years.

Harvesting seed is relatively easy because of its growth habit and resistance to lodging. Yields of clean seed are about 200 pounds per acre (Wright, 1989).



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

'Service' plant characteristics

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

(USDA, NRCS, 2004).

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

References

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