

## Grasses from Cuttings

**H. William Barnes**

Lorax Farms, 2319 Evergreen Ave., Warrington, Pennsylvania 18976

### INTRODUCTION

Most grasses are produced by seed or division. Much has been done in this regard and references abound for seed and division techniques. However, many grasses are sterile, seed supply is limited, and division of clumps can be time consuming and inefficient. Grasses from cuttings would be an important propagation tool.

Corley (1989) did a thorough study on grasses suitable for the southeastern United States. Species that he found that would propagate from cuttings were *Phalaris*, *Chasmanthium*, *Uniola*, *Elymus*, and *Pennisetum*. Thomas (1987) wrote a brief description of rooting *P. setaceum* 'Burgandy Giant' from cuttings.

### PRESENT TECHNIQUES

Species that have proven to be effective for large-scale production purposes are: *P. orientale*, *Panicum virgatum* 'Heavy Metal', *P. virgatum* 'Cloud Nine', *Imperata cylindrica* 'Rubra' (syn. 'Red Baron'), and *Sorghastrum avenaceum* (syn. *S. nutans*). Stock plants should be grown in containers; a 3-inch × 3-inch square pot is ideal. Lateral shoots are removed from the main clump with a very sharp knife. The break-off knives found at the hardware store are perfect for this type of work. The cutting is removed when the shoot is 3 to 6 inches long. It is important that the cutting has a slight curve at the basal end, resembling a #9 golf iron. If the cutting is too straight it will not root. Also it is important to make the cutting in an area just below a node

Cuttings are direct stuck in media. Thomas (1987) recommends sand; we used W.R. Grace 360 Metro Mix with excellent results. No hormone is needed. Corley (1989) could find no effect with applied IBA in talc. Many monocots and especially grasses do not respond to auxins until concentrations reach lethal concentrations. The tops of the cuttings can be trimmed but it is not necessary. Bottom heat appears to be stimulatory and should be used if it is available.

In a large study with *P. virgatum* 'Heavy Metal', 7200 cuttings were stuck and by 10 days 6700 cuttings were rooted. A 93% success rate.

### LITERATURE CITED

- Corley, W.L. 1989. Propagation of Ornamental Grasses Adapted to Georgia and the South East United States. Comb. Proc. Intl. Plant Prop. Soc. 39:332-337.
- Thomas, B. 1987. New Plant Forum. Comb. Proc. Intl. Plant Prop. Soc. 37:477.