



## CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM PLANT GUIDE

### BLUEBUNCH WHEATGRASS

**Cultivars:** Goldar, Secar, Whitmar  
**Seed Size:** 135,000 seeds/pound  
**Form:** Bunchgrass, 16-24" tall,  
Narrow-spike seedhead

**Area of Adaptation:** Bluebunch wheatgrass is adapted to areas of the Inland Pacific Northwest that receive between 7 and 24-inches of annual precipitation. Bluebunch wheatgrass is an important long-lived bunchgrass native to much of western North America. 'Goldar' was originally collected near Asotin, Washington in the foothills of the Blue Mountains. 'Whitmar' is a beardless type of bluebunch wheatgrass and originates from a stand in Whitman County, Washington. 'Secar' originates from a collection made in the Snake River canyon near Lewiston, Idaho. 'Secar' is the most drought tolerant of the three cultivars (7-18" ppt). 'Whitmar' is also very drought tolerant (9-20" ppt), and 'Goldar' is less tolerant (14"-24" ppt). Bluebunch wheatgrass is adapted to well-drained, loamy sand to clay loam soils.

**Seeding:** Bluebunch wheatgrass is fairly large seeded but must be seeded no deeper than 1/2". The seed has long bent awns that can cause bridging in drills. Most awns are removed during seed conditioning but enough awns usually remain on the seed to cause problems. It is extremely important to monitor seed drop, and it may be necessary to manually agitate seed in the drill box. A firm seedbed that allows for good seed to soil contact is necessary for good emergence. Seeding should be completed late in the fall or very early in the spring. It germinates readily at cool temperatures and grows fairly rapidly after emergence. It can be a difficult grass to establish if seedbed preparation operations are poorly implemented.

Fertilizer should not be applied to plantings. Annual weeds are more adept at using fertilizers and will compete more vigorously with the bluebunch wheatgrass seedlings.

Broadcast seeding should only be considered for fields that are too loose to pack. Light harrowing can improve stand establishment. Harrowing immediately prior to broadcasting is generally superior to harrowing after broadcasting. Harrowing after seeding can result in deep seed burial.

**Management & Uses:** Bluebunch wheatgrass is a preferred forage for most classes of livestock and wild ungulates. It is subject to overgrazing if not properly managed. Most reclamation plantings in the West require bluebunch wheatgrass in the mixtures. It is generally a poor reseeder but the plants are very persistent.

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