



CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM PLANT GUIDE

BIG SAGE

Seed Size: 2.5 million seeds/pound

Form: Long-lived Deciduous Shrub

Area of Adaptation: Big Sage is adapted to much of the Inland Pacific Northwest that receives between 7 and 16 inches of annual precipitation. It is also adapted to much of the Northern Rocky Mountains, Northern Great Plains, and Northern Great Basin. Big Sage grows on deep, well-drained sandy loams to clay loams. Most Big Sage seed is collected from stands in the wild. "Hobble Creek" is a released variety of Big Sage but seed availability is limited. There are different races of Big Sage in the Intermountain West. It is very important to use correct race when making plantings to ensure good survival. Big Sage is an excellent reseeder once the plants reach maturity.

Seeding: Big Sage is extremely small-seeded and must be seeded no deeper than 1/8-inch. 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 somewhat slowly after emergence. Seed rarely persists in the soil more than a few months so it is important to plant Big Sage seed when conditions are optimal for germination and emergence.

Drills should be set up to place seeds on the soil surface for CRP seedings. Since Big Sage is small-seeded, it will be necessary to either seed it as a separate operation after seeding CRP grasses, or place the Big Sage seed in the legume box and pull the drop tubes out of the opener. Mixing Big Sage with 'Sherman' Big Bluegrass seed and broadcasting the mix on the soil surface after seeding grasses is an excellent seeding option. A Velmar[™] type spreader equipped with spiral roller harrows could be used.

Management & Uses: Big Sage is an important native shrub. It develops a very deep root system and classes of livestock although it is high in protein. Big Sage is an important forage for some wildlife species and several rare and endangered animals rely on Big Sage for food and cover. Big Sage is not fire tolerant so fire must not be used to revitalize CRP stands.

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