

Register of Australian Herbage Plant Cultivars

A. Grasses

1. Cocksfoot

Dactylis glomerata L. (cocksfoot) cv. Aberystwyth S.143

Reg. No. A-1a-6

Registered prior to December 1971

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Origin (5, 6)

This cultivar was developed by the Welsh Plant Breeding Station, Aberystwyth, by crossing the inbred progenies of a number of plants of an extreme growth form, plants of the type designated by Sir George Stapledon as the "Mop Cocksfoot". These plants were prostrate, multi-tillered, broad leaved, and formed dense broad cushions. During World War II, there occurred a loss of the prostrate habit to some extent but re-selection at Aberystwyth was undertaken and the "mop" form of growth was re-introduced into their cultivar. The characteristics of this cultivar are maintained by means of a pedigree certification scheme. The Welsh Plant Breeding Station regularly supplies breeder's seed to the National Institute of Agricultural Botany, Cambridge, which produces basic seed from it and distributes this for the production of certified seed. All certified seed is therefore only one generation removed from official basic seed. Certified in Tasmania in 1952.

Morphological description (5, 6, 8)

S.143 has a semi-prostrate and spreading habit of growth. It forms a large number of tillers, and individual plants form broad dense cushions. Its leaves are broad, long, and lax, and tend to be blue-green especially in the early stages of growth. Under close grazing it eventually forms a denser, leafier, and more even sward than Grasslands Apanui or Cressy, but maximum density is not achieved till the third year. Its seeds, like S.26, are comparatively large and average about 937,000 per kg.

Agronomic characters

S.143 has the same general agronomic characteristics of high winter and low summer dormancy as S.26; it has therefore a comparable area of adaptation.

In England it is regarded as a pasture type only. It is reported to be slow in establishing and late in starting into spring growth and very late in flowering. Its autumn production, however, is very good and it is believed to be persistent even under hard grazing and particularly valuable under hard grazing on light soils (1, 5, 6). In Scotland it is reported to start growth late in spring and to give less spring but greater summer production than earlier maturing cultivars (4).

Assessment in Tasmania shows it similar to S.26 in productivity. Compared with that variety it has slightly less seedling vigour and establishes more slowly, it has a little greater winter dormancy, is more susceptible to frost damage, and matures a little earlier (8). Its second and third years' productivity are generally less than Grasslands Apanui or Cressy but thereafter differences only show in winter when S.143 produces poorly (8). In Victoria it has also performed very much like S.26 and has not been quite as productive as Grasslands Ruanui in trials at Warragul (3). In trials at Canberra S.143 did not yield well at any season of the year (2). It flowers very late compared with other cocksfoots (7).

References

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