

# Register of Australian Herbage Plant Cultivars

## A. Grasses

### 2. Ryegrass

#### *Lolium perenne* L. (perennial ryegrass) cv. Medea

Reg. No. A-2a-5

Registered September 1967

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#### Origin

This cultivar was developed at the Waite Agricultural Research Institute, University of Adelaide, by selection of plants from C.P.I.19003, C.P.I.19004, and C.P.I.19006 collected near Medea in Algeria by the FAO-CSIRO joint plant collection project in 1954 (3). Selection of the particular C.P.I. lines was based on both spaced-plant and sward performances; the individual plants within each introduction were chosen on spaced-plant performance and production in clonally propagated swards (4). The cultivar, under the symbol Ga41, was tested for production and persistence under grazing in comparison with four other Mediterranean selections and Victorian perennial ryegrass.

Submitted by J.H. Silsbury of the Waite Agricultural Research Institute, University of Adelaide, and recommended by the South Australian Herbage Plant Liaison Committee for registration. Registered September 1967. Certified on a pedigree system by the South Australian Department of Agriculture.

#### Morphological description

Medea is very similar to Victorian perennial ryegrass and is not readily distinguished from it; it has a variable although generally rather more prostrate habit and a relatively broad leaf. Leaves are typically hairless and shining, and tillering ability is similar to Victorian but the tillers are thicker with well-developed anthocyanin pigmentation at the base. Spikelets are sessile and strongly adpressed to the rachis. The empty glume is almost as long as the spikelet; the lemma is not awned or only slightly so.

#### Agronomic characters

Medea is characterized by a high degree of summer dormancy and does not respond to summer rain. Autumn and winter production and summer persistence are much greater than Victorian after the year of establishment under a 7.5-month growing period; spring production is comparable to Victorian. Heading is normally earlier than Victorian - at Adelaide this is usually the first week in October. Medea is more drought tolerant than Victorian and is better adapted for use in areas at present marginal for perennial ryegrass, i.e. 7.5-8.0-month growing season. In this environment its autumn and winter yields are similar to those of Australian phalaris but its spring yield is less. It is as rust susceptible as Victorian (4).

Trials in Victoria have shown that it is more productive in late autumn, winter, and early spring than Grasslands Ruanui and Victorian but less productive during the rest of the season (1). It has also been found to be rather variable and to contain an appreciable proportion of short-lived plants (2).

#### References

- 1.Cade, J.W. (1969). The ryegrasses in Victoria. *J. Agric. Vict. Dep. Agric.* **67**, 300-5.
- 2.Hedding, R.R. (1970). Personal communication. Vict. Dep. Agric., Melbourne.
- 3.Neal-Smith, C.A. (1955). Report on herbage plant exploration in the Mediterranean region. FAO Rep. No. 415. (Rome.)
- 4.Salisbury, J.H. (1961). A study of dormancy, survival, and other characteristics in *Lolium perenne* L. at Adelaide, South Australia. *Aust. J. Agric. Res.* **12**, 1-9.