United States Department of Agriculture

A Conservation Plant Released by the Natural Resources Conservation Service
Los Lunas Plant Materials Center, Los Lunas, NM

# ‘Salado’ alkali sacaton

## *Sporobolus airoides* (Torr.) Torr.

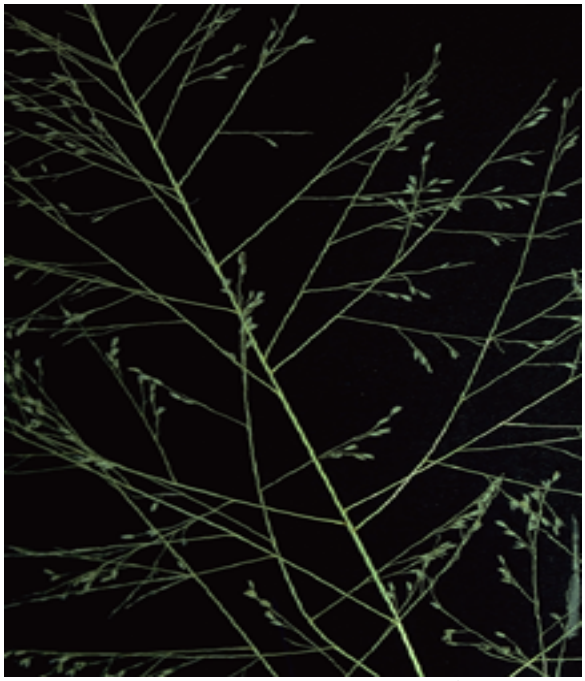

Photo courtesy of R. Mohlenbrock
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‘Salado’ alkali sacaton (*Sporobolus airoides)* (Torr.) Torr. was released in January 1983 by the New Mexico State University Los Lunas Agricultural Science Center and the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service Los Lunas Plant Materials Center.

‘Salado’ alkali sacaton was selected as an improved cultivar in 1966 after comparing it with other accessions of alkali sacaton. Seed from the original collection was used to establish a seed increase field, and during the years between 1958 and 1966, was evaluated for seedling vigor, establishment, and forage and seed production.

### Description

‘Salado’ alkali sacaton is a native, perennial, warm-season bunchgrass. The culms are erect, spreading 50 to 100 cm (20 to 40 inches) tall; sheaths pilose at the throat; ligule pilose, leaf blades elongate flat becoming involute, usually less than 4 mm wide. Often flexuous, the panicle is nearly half the entire height of the plant and at maturity, one-half to two-thirds as wide. The stiff, slender branches and branchlets spread wildly, are naked at the base, and the spikelets aggregate along the upper one-half to two-thirds of the plant and are 2 cm long (0.75 inch). The glume is about half as long and commonly falls toward maturity.

### Source

Seed was collected in 1958 from a shallow, upland range site at an elevation of 1,800 m (5,900 ft.) located 12 kilometers (7.5 miles) south of Claunch, New Mexico. The average annual precipitation in this area is approximately 30 centimeters (12 inches).

### Conservation Uses

‘Salado’ alkali sacaton is a good source of forage or as pasture grass in lowlands and in alkali regions. It is useful for range improvement, mined land reclamations, highway revegetation, and forage production on most arid lands in the West.

### Area of Adaptation and Use

‘Salado’ alkali sacaton is adapted at elevations of 500 to 2,500 meters (1,600 to 8,200 ft.). It is adapted to moderately alkaline soils of bottomlands and flats, on sandy plateaus and washes, and on light- to heavy-textured soils. It is common along drainage areas in arid and semi-arid regions.

### Establishment and Management for Conservation Plantings

‘Salado’ alkali sacaton reproduces from seeds and tillers. The seeds remain viable for years and germinate without being scarified. Plant seeds in the spring when soil temperature are near 86°F (30°C) and precipitation probabilities are the greatest. The plants can survive on 12 to 18 inches of precipitation per year.

### Ecological Considerations

Alkali sacaton is considered a primary or secondary invader on saline soils. The plant intrudes directly on saline flats or follows a stage where “succulent” plants are dominant.

### Seed and Plant Production

For successful establishment, sufficient moisture is needed within four weeks of seeding due to small seed size. Plant in rows 36-42 inches apart and at a rate of 0.25 to 0.50 pls lbs. per acre. Excellent production can be expected the first five years, after which production appears erratic. Yields have ranged from 50 to 328 pls lbs/acre. Multiple insecticide applications are beneficial for maximum seed production.

**Availability**

Breeder and foundation seed of 'Salado' alkali sacaton is produced and maintained at the Los Lunas Plant Materials Center. Seed is available to certified growers through New Mexico State University Seed Certification.


*For more information, contact:*
Los Lunas Plant Materials Center
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http://plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov/nmpmc/


**Citation**


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For additional information about this and other plants, please contact your local USDA Service Center, NRCS field office, or Conservation District <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/>, and visit the PLANTS Web site <http://plants.usda.gov> or the Plant Materials Program Web site <http://www.plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov>

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This is a joint release between New Mexico State University's Los Lunas Agricultural Science Center and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Los Lunas Plant Materials Center.

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