

Tully

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DESCRIPTION

Tully koronivia grass (*Urochloa humidicola* cv Tully, formerly *Brachiaria humidicola* cv Tully) is a strong creeping perennial, which roots vigorously from lower nodes and forms a dense matted sward.

Leaf blades are 12 to 15 cm long, expanded, rounded at the base, lanceolate and tapering to an acute point. They are 8 mm to 10 mm wide. Flowering stems are erect, and up to 60 cm high.

The seed is similar to that of signal grass. There are about 200 000 seeds/kg.

CLIMATE AND SOILS

Tully grass is a native of East and Southeast tropical Africa and has been widely used in Fiji. Koronivia is the Fijian name.

It is suitable for areas receiving more than 1000 mm average annual rainfall.

Tully is adapted to the same environments as signal grass, but is more tolerant of poor drainage. Its growing season is more compressed into the wet season than signal grass, but will grow longer into the dry season than pangola grass.

There are suggestions that Tully tolerates lower soil phosphorus levels than signal grass. It will remain productive under heavy grazing without fertiliser application.



ESTABLISHMENT

Tully establishes readily from either cuttings or seed. Minimum standards for seed quality are 40% purity and 15% germination.

A well-prepared, weed-free seedbed is preferred to ensure good establishment. Seed should be sown by a combine or drum seeder and lightly rolled. Sow as early as possible in the wet season on good soil moisture and when there is a likelihood of follow-up rain.

Tully has been successfully sown by combine into a dry seedbed when follow-up rain fell within a week of sowing.

Seed can be sown at 2 kg to 6 kg/ha. The higher rates should be used if weed competition is likely to be strong. While Tully is slow to establish because of native grass and weed competition, or if a low seeding rate is used and it is not well fertilised, many sowings have produced good stands by the end of their second wet season after a poor first year.

MANAGEMENT

Fertiliser Requirements

Tully responds to fertilisers, particularly nitrogen (N).

Annual forage yield and quality are similar to those of signal grass, which is 4 to 6 t/ha dry matter without N fertiliser and over 12 t/ha dry matter with 100 to 200 kg N fertiliser. It produces more herbage during the wet season than signal grass.

Sow seed, or plant cuttings or runners, with 100 kg to 200 kg/ha of superphosphate and apply maintenance dressings of 50 kg to 100 kg/ha/year.

Potassium may be required on some soils, particularly with intensive use, such as areas where hay is regularly cut.

Grazing

Heavy grazing for a short period in February or March during the wet season of establishment promotes the production of runners. The stand can be lightly-grazed during the first dry season.

It can tolerate heavy wet-season grazing on poorly-drained soils where signal grass and Guinea grass will not persist.

Acceptability of Tully by animals can vary for no apparent reason. Tully is more readily grazed by cattle and buffalo if it is applied with a small dressing of N fertiliser of about 25 kg to 50 kg/ha. Acceptance is best when Tully is well-grazed and short rather than tall, rank and hayed off.



Horses vary greatly in their acceptance of Tully as green feed or hay. Some horses graze green feed and/or hay readily while others will eat green feed only, hay only, or neither.

At a stocking rate of one yearling steer/ha, annual live-weight gains of 100 kg to 120 kg/animal can be expected.

In years with long dry seasons and/or a late start to the wet season, Tully pastures can die out if continuously-grazed early in the wet season. Grazing animals may need to be removed to prevent the plants dying.

Mixtures

Tully's vigorous and dense habit makes it difficult for weeds or legumes to grow with it. While palatable legumes tend to be selectively grazed in preference to Tully, Glenn, Amiga, Verano and Wynn may be suitable for planting with it.

PESTS AND DISEASES

In the Darwin area, Tully has disappeared in patches of up to 10 m in diameter in apparently healthy pastures. These patches normally occur during the late dry season under high grazing pressure, particularly from horses. These patches are most likely caused by larvae of a root-eating curl grub known as cockchafer or cane grub (*Lepidiota* sp). The grubs can be found eating roots on healthy plants bordering the affected area.

There have been no other pests or diseases observed to cause economic problems.

WARNING

Pasture plants have the potential to become weeds in certain situations. To prevent that, ensure that pasture seeds and/or vegetative materials are not inadvertently transferred to adjacent properties or road sides.

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ISSN 0157-8243

Serial No. 550

Agdex No. 131/32

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