



'Egan' American Sloughgrass

Beckmannia syzigachne

Uses: Wetland Reclamation, Waterfowl Enhancement Throughout Alaska

Background Information

American Sloughgrass (*Beckmannia syzigachne*)

- Grows wild in Alaska along wet meadows, marshes, and swamps.
- Grows in almost any soil.
- Can grow in shade or sun.
- Tolerates acid, neutral, basic, and saline soils.
- Is cold-hardy.
- Is palatable to livestock.



Map from Hultén, 1968.
Used with the permission of Stanford University Press.

Distribution

Beckmannia syzigachne occurs in much of Alaska. This species grows throughout the world in subarctic and temperate zones.

Growth

American sloughgrass in the wild is an annual or weak perennial bunchgrass with flowers in June and seed ripening from July to August.

Established plants reach about 1 meter high. Its roots are fibrous.



The flower and seed head are distinctive. The flowers are pollinated by wind.

Cultivar: 'Egan'

Plant Introduction Number: 540423

'Egan' American Sloughgrass is a cultivar that is a perennial. It can produce seed for 4—5 years.

'Egan' was developed and released by the Alaska Plant Materials Center in 1986 for wetland reclamation (Wright, 1991).

The original seed was collected in roadfill near Fairbanks.

'Egan' American Sloughgrass is recognized in breeder, foundation, registered, and certified seed classes. Breeder and foundation seed is maintained by the Alaska Plant Materials Center. Registered and certified seed is available through the Alaska Seed Growers, Inc.

Historical Uses

According to *Plants for a Future* (2003), *Beckmannia* seed has been used for human food—either cooked or ground into a flour. The entire plant was used for bedding and pillows (Moerman, 2002).

American sloughgrass is an important part of Alaska wetlands—offering wildlife shelter and food.



'Egan' American Sloughgrass



'Egan' American Sloughgrass for Alaska Wetland Reclamation

'Egan' was selected for its potential in wetland reclamation. During tests, it outperformed all other tested cultivars of wetland adapted species.

Alaska revegetation and erosion control plantings in seasonally wet places between the 60 degree north latitude and the Arctic Circle will have better success with 'Egan' American Sloughgrass as part of the seed mix (Wright, 1991).



Beckmannia syzigachne seed
~1,238,000 seeds per pound

Fun Information:

The word "slough" means a marsh or swamp with deep mud.

The species name is *syzigachne* which means scissors-like in reference to the glumes or lower-most bracts of the grass flower.

To produce 'Egan' American Sloughgrass

'Egan' prefers a moist soil. Plant it in the spring like other grass crops. It does best when irrigated. Once established, 'Egan' can be expected to last approximately four years.

'Egan' seed heads mature in mid-August. Standard equipment is satisfactory for growing 'Egan'. Cleaning is slightly challenging because the seed needs to be cleaned with special caution taken not to include small weed seed (Wright, 1991).

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'Egan' — For Landscapes and Wildlife.

'Egan' is a light green grass with an unusual and distinctive flower/seed head.

Waterfowl use it for food and shelter. It grows up to 90 cm in height.



'Egan' plant characteristics!

Wetness Tolerance	very good
Acidity Tolerance	fair
Seedling Vigor	good
Yield Potential	low
Longevity	intermediate
Seed Production	high
Drought Resistance	poor
Winter Hardiness	high
Root System	bunch
Palatability	fair

References

Hultén, E. 1968. *Flora of Alaska and Neighboring Territories*. © by the Board of Trustees of the Leland Stanford Jr. University, Stanford University Press, Stanford.

Moerman, D. 2002. *Native American Ethnobotany*. Timber Press, Portland, Oregon.

[Plants For A Future - Species Database](#). 2003. Blagdon Cross, Ashwater, Beaworthy, Devon, EX21 5DF, UK.

Wright, S. 1991. *Registration of 'Egan' American Sloughgrass*. *Crop Science* 31, pp. 1380-1381.