

MEGAMAX™ 049

PANIC GRASS



450mm +



5.5-6.0



Deep, fertile loamy soils



AgriCote

KEY FEATURES

- Very leafy with high tiller density with fine, soft, pliable leaves
- Responds rapidly to rainfall
- Significantly higher biomass production than Gatton panic in most WA trials
- Highly palatable and well eaten by both sheep and cattle
- Excellent persistence under extended dry conditions (Northern Agricultural Region WA) and over winter (south coast WA).



DESCRIPTION

Megamax 049 is a new panic grass and the first sub-tropical (warm season, C4) perennial grass variety specifically selected for southern Australia — with the field evaluation undertaken in WA, Qld and northern NSW. It was selected because of its superior growth characteristics including increased production, high persistence and cool season tolerance in comparison to other commercial sub-tropical grass cultivars. It is a short to medium height panic grass with fine, soft foliage, fine stems and a high tiller density. It has an erect growth habit, good synchronisation of flowering and high seed production. Megamax 049 originates where the average annual rainfall is 450 mm and where there is a pronounced dry season. It is highly productive with excellent persistence and is very well suited to WA, and likely to replace 'Green panic' in coastal areas of Queensland.

VARIETY MANAGEMENT / AGRONOMY

All panic grasses require well drained soils and some form of rotational grazing to persist in the medium to long-term. Top-growth is burnt by frosts and they have poor persistence in areas with a combination of occasional frosts and cold, wet soils.

Establishment

Germination should be tested, since seed of some genotypes may not reach maximum germination until up to 18 months after harvest, while others may take only a few months. Dormancy can be overcome by removal of glumes from fresh seed. Seed can be drilled or broadcast at 2-3 kg/ha, and being a small seed, should be planted at no more than 1 cm deep. Rolling after sowing improves germination and establishment. Panic Grass can also be established from rooted tillers (or cuttings with thick stemmed varieties) planted on the contour every 0.5-0.6 m in rows 1.25-1.5 m apart, or as close as 40 cm in a triangular pattern if a faster cover is required.

Fertiliser

Establishment fertiliser is necessary on infertile soils, using 20-40 kg/ha P, and about 50 kg/ha N if limited cultivation prior to planting. Maintenance fertiliser is needed for pure grass swards especially in cut-and-carry systems. Inadequate N will lead to weakening of the stand and invasion by less desirable species. Maintenance dressings of 20-40 kg/ha/yr N are required to promote healthy, productive stands on less fertile soils. Soils with a pH <5 require addition of lime to raise pH to 5.5 - 6.



Compatibility (with other species)

Combines well with twining legumes under light grazing. As these legumes are generally less tolerant of grazing than the grass, the legume component declines and weeds increase under heavier grazing. Panic Grass should not be planted with less palatable grasses as this leads to selection and decline of the variety. It can be grown successfully under open forest or plantation due to shade tolerance.

Palatability/acceptability

Megamax™ 049 is well eaten by all classes of grazing livestock, with particularly high intakes of young leafy growth.

Defoliation

Susceptible to frequent low cutting. For long-term maintenance of stand, generally varieties should not be cut or grazed below about 30 cm, and should be cut or grazed at about 4-weekly intervals to obtain best balance between quality and quantity. Fire does not cause long-term damage.

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