



NativeGrass
Resources Group Inc

Promoting sustainable use,
management and conservation
of native grasses in the
Mount Lofty Block

Benefits of conserving and using native grasses

-  **Revegetation**
-  **Water Management**
-  **Lawns, Parks & Gardens**
-  **Grazing Management**
-  **Soil Management**
-  **Weed Management**

Native Grasses in Focus

Early European settlers were very impressed with the coastal plains and rolling hills that they found in *Terra Australis*. They wrote in glowing terms of the abundant grasses and widely-spaced trees, and of land that was fit for the plough.

Before many years had passed, rabbits, recurrent droughts, millions of hooved feet and, finally, the plough, had rapidly changed the landscape. European farming methods did irreparable harm to an environment that settlers did not understand. It is doubtful if, in the early days of settlement, any of the farmers or government officials would have realised that, in the long run, 94% of the continent would resist agricultural conquest.

Our Northern Hemisphere origins still strongly influence our land management practices. Unfortunately many of these practices are an impediment to truly sustainable land use.

We believe that one key to truly sustainable land management lies in the native grass component of grassy woodlands and tussock grasslands. Unwisely, we are still neglecting the agricultural, amenity and domestic potential of native plant species.

The Purpose of this Brochure

This brochure summarises much of what is so far known and practised in relation to the characteristics and uses of native grasses.

It is our hope that the brochure will enable you to visualise and identify valuable potential uses for native grasses in your enterprise or field of interest.

Revegetation



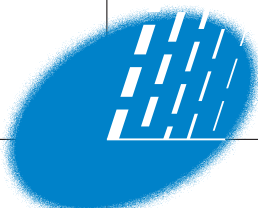
Actual & potential benefits of conserving & using native grasses

- > co-evolved with woody species from at least 5 million years ago
- > most woodlands and shrubland have native grasses as dominant groundcover
- > many regions were 'naturally' grasslands
- > they have aesthetic value as local 'Aussies'
- > they have a wildlife-habitat role
- > many respond positively to fire i.e. improves their vigour; opens up growing sites for their seeds
- > rehabilitation of remnant vegetation and start-up revegetation can be made easier by first establishing and managing native grasses

Revegetation



Water Management



*Actual & potential
benefits of conserving
& using native grasses*

- > many are long-lived, deep-rooted perennials, features which assist water infiltration and stability of soil organic matter
- > evolved in the Southern Hemisphere over 100's of thousands of years of weathering and climate change
- > growth spurts in spring and often autumn assist recharge and discharge processes
- > growth spurts in response to rain or a good soaking, but not requiring regular watering
- > sparse or fine-leaf or hairy blue-grey leaf indicative of transpiration control features
- > help to maintain a low water table (in areas of potential rising salinity)
- > available soil moisture used by some species at a slower rate than exotic grasses
- > summer active species have drought survival features

Water

Lawns, Parks and Gardens




*Actual & potential
benefits of conserving
& using native grasses*

- > aesthetic appeal in form and colour
- > many species available to suit different situations and demands
- > low nutrient requirements in comparison to high needs of many exotic grasses
- > occasional mowing needs or...
- > no mowing...the low shaggy look
- > reduced water requirements for a number of species
- > reduced maintenance costs, once established
- > by growing your own native grasses for seed and/or subdivision you save \$\$\$
- > planted stands of native grasses will provide a seed bank for further plantings

Gardens

Grazing Management




Actual & potential benefits of conserving & using native grasses

- > native grasses respond well to rotational grazing régimes
- > ideally suited to lower input farming systems
- > many persist as summer green fodder
- > grazing can be targeted to favour perennial natives over annual weeds and withdrawn to ensure seed set and seed fall
- > research data is available for ME/CP/DM*; grazing formulae have been published
- > a mix of winter and summer active species promotes year-round available feed, even in a harsh season
- > managed grazing of native grasses can deliver a conservation benefit
- > some of the finest wool in the nation has been traditionally grown on native-dominant grass pastures

*ME Metabolisable energy, CP crude protein, DM digestibility/dry matter

Grazing

Soil Management



*Actual & potential
benefits of conserving
& using native grasses*

- > perennial grasses and companion plants are critical to the health of soils
- > effective in drying out soils, thus reducing deep drainage and reducing salt discharge
- > as many are long-lived perennials, soil disturbance is reduced and soil cover maintained
- > provide soil cover in the critical end-of-summer breaking rains period
- > minimal to nil fertilizer requirements (fertilizer will cause dieback in many native grass species and favour growth of exotic species)
- > fertilizer infiltration into waterways reduced
- > approximately 141 summer active and 131 winter active native grass species protect soils across South Australia

Did you know?

a range of machines to direct seed and harvest mature seed heads is available through private manufacturers and specialist operators

Soil

Weed Management



*Actual & potential
benefits of conserving
& using native grasses*

- > can out-compete exotic grasses in poor soils but exotics dominate in high rainfall zones
- > many have tolerance to commonly-used herbicides
- > many are suitable replacements for roadside 'weeds'
- > lesser fuel load in some species offers fire reduction potential
- > many are low-growing and/or sparse-leafed
- > reduced maintenance costs for Councils and Depts of Transport
- > minimal soil disturbance will encourage recruitment by native grasses

Need more information?

Like to join the Group?

Contact us by mail: c/-

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or through our web site:

www.nativegrassgroup.asn.au

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Weed