



RIVER SALTBUSH

Scientific name

Atriplex amnicola

Origin

Murchison and Gascoyne areas of WA.

Description

Can be prostrate or erect in growth habit. Leaves tend to be elongated and spear shaped when mature. Young leaves are more oval in shape. Leaves are more green, than the grey-green typical of saltbush, with new stem growth having a redish tinge in colour.

Grows up to 2.5 metres high.

Branches of more prostrate forms may develop roots if they reach the ground.

Rainfall zone

250-550 mm



River saltbush



River saltbush fruits (photo courtesy Saltland Pastures in Australia).

Salinity/Waterlogging tolerance

Moderate to high tolerance of salinity and winter waterlogging, although long periods of waterlogging in summer can cause death.

High drought tolerance.

Site selection and establishment

River saltbush is native to the Murchison area of Western Australia and has the best long term survival of all saltbushes. It tends to perform best in warmer northern agricultural areas, however good results can still be achieved further south. River saltbush can be difficult to establish from seed, so for the first time grower it is recommended that seedling are used. 'Rivermor' and 'Meeberrie' lines have been selected for better establishment by direct seeding and are more likely to produce volunteer seedlings. Planting is best done in spring



(August onwards), when soil temperatures are warmer. Saltbush should be planted in narrow rows on moderately saline sites, or wider rows on fresher sites, where grasses and clovers may grow underneath.

Compatible species

Generally not recommended for direct seeding, (old man and wavy leaf saltbush are more successful), however research is being undertaken to improve establishment from seed.

If growing seedlings, mix with old man saltbush.

Grazing saltbush-based pastures

Most farmers find grazing saltbush most valuable during the autumn feed gap, however grazing saltbush is not as simple as putting the sheep in and closing the gate. Saltbush is high in crude protein, but is also high in salt and low in metabolisable energy. This means that sheep grazing saltbush will need a low-salt, high energy understorey or supplement (such as hay) to achieve weight maintenance.

They will also need a plentiful supply of good quality water to help flush the salts from their system.

Saltbush based pastures can usually achieve stocking rates of 4-7 sheep per hectare. On sites with good understorey growth, the higher stocking rates can be achieved if rotational grazing is used. This improves animal performance by forcing the animals to eat a more equal mix of high protein saltbush and high energy understorey. If rotational grazing is not feasible or if understorey growth is limited, lower stocking rates should be used.



River saltbush seedling

River saltbush is one of the more palatable species and recovers well from heavy grazing.

Cost:

Seedlings – 30-40 cents each.

Seed - \$60 –90/kg.

Seedlings are available from most commercial tree nurseries.

Seed is available from native seed suppliers.

For more information:

Visit the Saltland Pastures Association website on www.crcsalinity.com.au/spa

Barrett-Lennard, Ed. (2003). Saltland Pastures in Australia – A Practical Guide. Land, Water and Wool, Canberra.



Australian Government
Department of Agriculture,
Fisheries and Forestry
National Landcare Program

