



OLD MAN SALTBUSH

Scientific name

Atriplex nummularia

Origin

Arid and semi arid zones of southern Australia

Description

A long lived, large, erect shrub with an extensive root system, growing to two metres. The leaves are a greyish green, irregularly shaped and large compared to other saltbush species.

Suitable rainfall zone

175-400mm

Salinity/Waterlogging tolerance

Moderate tolerance to salinity. Does not tolerate long periods of waterlogging, especially in summer. Highly drought tolerant.

Site selection and establishment

Due to its extensive root system, old man saltbush is suited to sites where water use is a priority. Old man saltbush can be established from seed (using a niche seeder) on sandy surfaced duplex soils, or can also be planted as a seedling in heavier soils. Seedlings can be planted from winter through spring, usually as soon as is convenient after seeding. Direct seeding 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.



Old man saltbush

Compatible species

If direct seeding, mix with wavy leaf saltbush.

If growing seedlings, mix with river 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



Female (left) and male old man saltbush



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.

Old man saltbush can be less palatable than other saltbush species, however it is usually of equal or better nutritional value. The variety 'De Kock' has better palatability. Old man saltbush can be heavily grazed and recovers well from grazing.



Sheep grazing old man saltbush

Cost:

Seedlings – 30 - 40 cents each.

Seed - \$60 – 100/kg, depending on source and variety.

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

