Plant Data Sheet

Species (common name, Latin name) – Beargrass, *Xerophyllum tenax*

Range – British Columbia east to southwestern Alberta and south through the coast ranges and the west slope of Sierra Nevada to central California. Also in the Rocky Mountains. States where beargrass is present: CA, ID, MT, OR, WA, WY, AB, and BC.

Climate, elevation – Beargrass often occurs in cold, dry sites of the subalpine zone. There are low elevation populations of beargrass, however, in which it occurs in bogs and some dry areas.

Local occurrence (where, how common) – Beargrass is relatively common in the subalpine zone in the Cascades and Olympics.

Habitat preferences – Beargrass occurs on poor nutrient soils. It is often a dominant understory on upper slopes under a canopy of conifers. In addition, it is common in subalpine meadows in which there is full sunlight.

Plant strategy type/successional stage (stress-tolerator, competitor, weedy/colonizer, seral, late successional) – Beargrass is very frost tolerant. It is a facultative seral species that does well following fire.

Associated species – Huckleberry, subalpine fir, mountain hemlock, Pacific silver fir, Shasta red fir, grand fir, western white pine, western hemlock, and lodgepole pine.

May be collected as: (seed, layered, divisions, etc.) – Seed. Transplanting the whole plant is extremely difficult.

Collection restrictions or guidelines – Seeds start setting in July and continue through September. Beargrass is protected in many locations in which it exists (i.e. Olympics and Cascades).

Seed germination (needs dormancy breaking?) – seeds need at least 12-16 weeks of cold stratification for germination.

Seed life (can be stored, short shelf-life, long shelf-life) – Seeds can be dried and stored for extended shelf life.

Recommended seed storage conditions – Seeds can be sown directly in the fall or stored dry at subfreezing temperatures.

Propagation recommendations (plant seeds, vegetative parts, cuttings, etc.) – Plant seeds in late fall and hand sow by covering seeds with ½" of soil.

Soil or medium requirements (inoculum necessary?) – Well-drained soil, gritty and open with good

humus on top. No fertilizer products should be used. For spring sowing, presoak the seed in distilled water for 24 hours, sow on moist vermiculite with a light covering of more vermiculite, and cold stratify for 16 weeks at 3 degrees C. Set the flats in a growth chamber at 18 degrees C for 12 hours during the day and 13 degrees C for 12 hours at night. Seed also germinates well if it is soaked and sown on a peat:vermiculite:perilite:pumice (2:2:2:1) edium, covered with 1-2 cm of perlite, and wetted down.

Installation form (form, potential for successful outcomes, cost) – Propagation is mostly done with seeds since transplanting it is not effective.

Recommended planting density – 3 oz. Of seed per 1000 ft^2

Care requirements after installed (water weekly, water once etc.) – Do not water seeds a lot at first. They may rot in the spring (late winter) if they are too wet. Once they begin their seasonal growth, they can handle a lot of water.

Normal rate of growth or spread; lifespan – Beargrass reproduces by rhizomes, so once it is established in an area, it is long-lived in that area unless area is heavily disturbed.

Sources cited –

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