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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

and

OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION

NOTICE OF RELEASE OF 'ELKTON' BLUE WILDRYE

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and Oregon State University (OSU) Agricultural Experiment Station, Corvallis, Oregon, announce the naming and release of 'Elkton' blue wildrye [*Elymus glaucus* var. *jepsonii* (Burt Davy) Gould], a native perennial bunchgrass. It was selected and tested by the NRCS Plant Materials Center, Corvallis, Oregon, under temporary number 9019690 and assigned the permanent number PI-593652 in 1996.

'Elkton' blue wildrye was collected from a native stand 11.5 miles northwest of the city of Sutherlin in Douglas County, Oregon at an elevation of 400 ft. (121 m) above sea level. The seed was originally obtained by employees of the NRCS (formerly the Soil Conservation Service) in 1979. It was evaluated for four years in a nonreplicated study at Corvallis against 128 other populations assembled from western Oregon, western Washington, northwestern California and several other western states. 'Elkton' was also tested in solid stands (swards) against 'Arlington' blue wildrye and other select accessions for two to four years at several sites in Oregon and Washington.

'Elkton' was not bred or hybridized, but was selected for its agronomic performance, earlier maturity and uniformity. It has been evaluated for culm height, above ground biomass, foliage appearance (as influenced by disease symptoms), foliage abundance, phenology, seed yield, vigor, and other characteristics. The variety can be most readily distinguished from other populations tested by its combination of (1) four to 14 day earlier maturity, (2) earlier spring regrowth, and (3) stand maintenance. Furthermore, the foliage of 'Elkton' is grass green in color, primarily up and down the stems, and lacks a glaucous appearance. Culms average 124 cm in height (range 100-150 cm), are bent at the base and in loose tufts. The leaf sheath is pubescent while the blades are less so or nearly glabrous, and the lemma awns are 1-2 cm long as described for var. *jepsonii* (Hickman, 1993, Hitchcock et. al., 1969). Positive identification was made by Dr. Richard Halse, curator, Oregon State University Herbarium.

'Elkton' ranks high in terms vigor, foliage abundance, spring recovery, and summer/fall regrowth and is a high seed producer.

'Elkton' blue wildrye is a native, cool season, perennial bunchgrass. It establishes rapidly from seed but is relatively short-lived. Evaluations in western Oregon and Washington indicate that 'Elkton' is suitable for erosion control and quick, self-perpetuating cover on logging roads, cut-over timberland, burned areas and steep hillsides. Prior to maturity, blue wildrye is considered fair to good forage for cattle, horses, deer and elk, but poor for sheep. The species may also be less competitive with recently planted forest tree seedlings compared to certain introduced grasses. However, the specific forage value of 'Elkton' and its compatibility with tree plantations is not fully established.

The known range of adaptation of 'Elkton' is the western interior valleys of Oregon and southwest Washington below 2000 ft (610m). Potential area of adaptation may extend to the coast range and Siskiyou region of Oregon and northern California, the Cascades below an elevation of 2500 ft (760m), and other areas with similar climate and soils within the species

**FACT SHEET**

**PLANT MATERIALS, NRCS**  
**United States**  
**Department of Agriculture**

**OREGON STATE**  
**WASHINGTON STATE**  
**May 1997**

**'ELKTON' BLUE WILD RYE**

Cultivar Name: 'Elkton' (PI593652, 9019690)

Common Name: blue wildrye

Scientific Name: *Elymus glaucus* var. *jepsonii* (Burt Davy) Coult

Selected By: Corvallis Plant Materials Center, NRCS

Release Cooperator: Oregon Agricultural Experiment Station

Release Date: 1997, Public Release

**COLD HARDINESS ZONES** (USDA, 1990): 7b, 8a, 9a, 9b

**ECOREGIONS** (US EPA, 1986): Coast Range -1 (except Olympic Penn.), Willamette Valley -3, Cascades -4 (except Washington north Skamania Co.), and Sierra Nevada -5 (Siskiyou area only). **Major Land Resource Areas (USDANRCS)**: A1 (except Olympic Penn.), A2 (except Washington north of Lewis Co.), A3 (except Washington north of Skamania Co.), A4, and A5.

**Description**: 'Elkton' blue wildrye is a short-lived perennial native grass that originated 11.5 miles northwest of Sutherlin, Douglas County Oregon, at 400 feet elevation with annual rainfall of 45 inches. 'Elkton' is an erect, medium coarse, loosely tufted grass with culms bent at the base. The foliage is primarily up and down the stems and grass green in color. Leaves are 3/8 to 9/16 inch in width, flat, lax, and senesce at maturity. Seedheads are purplish and bearded (awns up to 3/4 inch long). This variety has good vigor and develops earlier in the spring than other blue wildryes tested from within the region by the Corvallis PMC. It was not intentionally bred or hybridized, but was selected in comparison to other populations for its earlier maturity, good seed production, greater stand longevity, spring regrowth, and adaptation to western Oregon and northwestern California.

**Site conditions**: 'Elkton' blue wildrye is best suited to well-drained to moderately well-drained, coarse to moderately fine textured soils: clay loam to silt loam, loamy sand, and gravelly sandy loam. It will establish readily by seed without special treatment. Annual precipitation requirement is a minimum of 25 inches. Elevation requirement is 0 - 2,000 feet (0 - 2,500 feet in California). The drilled seeding rate for most conservation uses is 10 pounds per acre pure live seed (PLS).

**Conservation uses**: 'Elkton' blue wildrye is used for site rehabilitation after fire and logging or as a "pioneer" plant for erosion control in western Oregon and northwestern California. Establishment is rapid due to excellent seedling vigor. Other potential uses include cover with trees in open woodland wildlife habitat, herbage for ungulates, and promotion of native plant diversity.

**'Elkton' blue wildrye is available in limited quantities to growers from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Corvallis Plant Materials Center, 3415 NE Granger Avenue, Corvallis, Oregon 97330.**

**For additional information contact: Plant Resource Specialist, USDA NRCS, 127 Johnson Hall, NRS, Washington State University, Pullman, Washington 99164-6410.**

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