

# It's Called SONORA

## At Last, a Commercial Release Of an Improved Black Gramagrass

By L. Neal Wright

Naming and release of a variety of black gramagrass, *Bouteloua eriopoda*, is jointly announced by the Department of Agronomy of The University of Arizona, and the Crops Research Division, U. S. Department of Agriculture. This is the first improved black gramagrass variety to be released for commercial seed production and use.

Black gramagrass is a major range grass species in Arizona, New Mexico, southwestern Texas, and the northern states of Mexico. Additionally, black gramagrass is an important forage grass in parts of Oklahoma, Colorado, Utah, Nevada, and California. Much of the area of major importance has been designated the Sonoran desert. Because black gramagrass is native, and occurs abundantly, over a wide altitudinal range of this semiarid to arid grassland area, the new variety is named Sonora.

### An Excellent Range Grass

Black gramagrass possesses many desirable characteristics, making it an outstanding range grass. Black gramagrass is a long-lived perennial that can be maintained on the range. Its drought tolerance is exceptional, this characteristic effectively demonstrated through all growth stages. It is a dependable forage plant, with ability to perform well under grazing.

The grass is characteristically nutritious at all times of the year. In comparison with other range species, the winter and spring nutritional values make black gramagrass outstanding. It is a palatable forage and highly relished throughout the year. The grass is a natural source of reserve feed, since ungrazed stems remain green

This is a contribution from the Crops Research Division, Agricultural Research Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture, and of the Department of Agronomy, University of Arizona. The author is a Research Agronomist with USDA — ARS, and Professor of Agronomy in this university.

and nutritious for two or more seasons.

Black gramagrass also has soil protection qualities which are most desirable, since the stem joints take root and provide soil protection as well as a means for spreading and revegetation.

One characteristic limiting the widespread use of black gramagrass for range seeding has been its extremely poor and unreliable seed-setting capabilities. Thus, a major objective of the research leading to release of Sonora black gramagrass was to maintain the many desirable characteristics while also improving seed production and forage characteristics.

Based on progeny performance, 12 selected clones constitute the synthetic variety, Sonora. All clonal entries are diploid ( $2n = 20$ ) and reproduce sexually. Performance data of Sonora black gramagrass compared to the Flagstaff collection are presented in the adjoining table. Sonora is outstanding for leafiness, vigor, for-

## In Arizona "Christmas" Is Here All Year Long

This is the time when we all look forward to Christmas, but the highway marker pictured on Page 9 looks toward Christmas all year long — meaning the tiny mining town of Christmas, Arizona.

The sign is on Highway 77, between Winkelman and Globe, as you "take the high road" in driving from Tucson to that Gila County seat.

Like most of Arizona, it is a setting of nature's grandeur — deep canyons, swift-flowing rivers (in season) and rugged mountains serrated against the deep blue of the desert sky. We suggest that road for a Sunday drive.

age production, vegetative spread, components of seed-set, and seed production when compared with the Flagstaff collection.

The variety has been released on the basis of the following classes of seed: breeder, foundation, and certified. The registered class will not be used. Breeder seed will be maintained by Crops Research Division of ARS at Tucson. Foundation seed production and distribution for commercial production will be handled through the Arizona Crop Improvement Assn., which has offices in this College of Agriculture. Limited supplies of commercially produced seed should be available in 1966.

**Sonora Black Gramagrass Progeny Evaluation for Seed and Forage Yield, and Components of Seed Yield.**

Entry	Seed yield (gms.)	Forage Yield		Spikes per inflor. (no.)	Florets per spike (no.)	Seed per spike (no.)	Seed-set (%)
		green (lbs.)	air-dry (lbs.)				
34	19.2	2.1	1.7	4.1	12.6	9.5	75.3
71	18.3	2.1	1.5	3.4	11.5	8.7	75.9
69	18.2	1.9	1.4	3.9	13.2	10.3	78.4
56	15.4	1.8	1.4	4.1	13.4	10.9	81.6
33	15.2	1.9	1.5	4.0	10.9	8.5	77.9
43	12.7	1.8	1.3	4.2	13.3	10.5	79.3
40	12.5	1.4	1.0	4.4	14.2	11.3	79.4
15	12.2	1.2	0.6	4.8	14.3	11.0	77.5
54	11.8	1.4	1.1	3.7	12.4	10.1	80.9
63	11.8	1.4	1.1	4.0	11.5	9.2	79.6
51	11.5	1.6	1.3	3.8	13.2	10.6	80.6
76	11.4	1.1	0.9	4.6	12.1	9.4	77.6
Syn.	15.6	1.8	1.4	4.1	12.7	10.0	78.7
Flagstaff	2.9	0.37	0.23	3.9	12.5	10.8	80.1