

COASTAL BERMUDA GRASS

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Although Bermuda grass, *Cynodon dactylon*, is now distributed throughout the tropical and subtropical parts of the world, the best evidence points to Asia and particularly to India as the land of its origin. There, because it furnishes feed for the sacred cow, Bermuda grass long has been considered a special gift of God, and, like the cow, has been held sacred. In the United States, particularly in the Southeast, it has been a serious pest in cultivated fields for years. It is easy to understand, therefore, why farmers, dependent upon cotton and tobacco for a livelihood, developed a hatred for Bermuda grass. Only recently, with the growing interest in livestock production and soil conservation, have they begun to recognize the merits of this grass. Pasture specialists agree that Bermuda grass is the best upland pasture grass for the Southeast. As a plant to prevent soil erosion it is unsurpassed and is now being planted on land no longer suited for cultivation. Many farmers who have fought Bermuda grass for years are now planting it. That it will enjoy a greater use and a better reputation in the future seems certain.

ORIGIN OF COASTAL BERMUDA GRASS³

Coastal Bermuda is a highly productive hybrid between Tift Bermuda (discovered by J. L. Stephens in an old cotton patch near Tifton, Georgia, in 1929) and an introduction from South Africa. It was developed as follows:

In 1937 two tall growing strains of Bermuda grass from South Africa, common Bermuda, and Tift Bermuda were interplanted so that many hybrids might be produced naturally. Sufficient seed was collected from these parents in 1937 to produce over 5,000 seedling plants in 1938.

During the summer of 1938 each of these seedling plants (kept separate by wide spacing and cultivation) was studied carefully in an effort to select the most promising individuals. These studies revealed

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³Burton, Glenn W. Breeding Bermuda grass for the Southeastern United States. Jour. Am. Soc. Agron. 39:551-569. 1947.

