

Megamax[®]049 Panic grass

Panicum maximum

Tropical



450mm+



5.5–8.0



Deep, fertile
loamy soils



AgriCote

Suggested sowing rates
(AgriCote coated seed)

Marginal dryland: 4–6kg/ha

Ideal dryland: 8–12kg/ha

Irrigated: 15–20kg/ha

Key features

- Very leafy with high tiller density
- Exceptional palatability - fine, soft pliable leaves
- Significantly higher biomass production than Gatton Panic in trials
- Excellent persistence under extended dry conditions and over winter
- Rapid response to rainfall
- High quality feed and greater production potential
- Readily eaten by all stock types
- Well suited to grazing or cutting
- Cold tolerance – longer growing season into autumn
- Early season growth – exceptional winter bounce back
- Shade tolerant

Megamax[®]049 is a new 'Green' panic grass (*Panicum maximum*) type. This variety is the first sub-tropical, warm season, C4 perennial grass variety specifically selected for southern regions of Australia, with field evaluation work undertaken in Western Australia, Queensland and northern New South Wales. It was selected because of its superior growth characteristics including increased production, high persistence and cool season growth tolerance in comparison to other commercial sub-tropical grass cultivars. It is a short to medium height panic grass, with fine soft foliage, fine stems and a high tiller density. It has an erect growth habit, good synchronisation of flowering and high seed production. Megamax[®]049 originates where the average annual rainfall is 450mm and where there is a pronounced dry season.

Agronomy and management

Megamax®049 is well suited to tropical, sub-tropical and warm temperate coastal regions, being very well suited to Western Australia, coastal areas of Queensland and sub-tropical New South Wales. This variety performs best on deep, fertile, moist soils and will tolerate varying soil types provided they are well drained. Will not tolerate waterlogging, salinity or very acidic soils. Megamax®049 can tolerate frosts, with the tops being damaged and killed off and plants then recovering during the onset of warmer conditions. This variety exhibits early season growth coming out of winter with exceptional 'bounce back', with best growth in early spring, better than either Rhodes grass or buffel. The strong perennial and persistent character of Megamax®049 makes it a suitable fit for long term pastures. Tolerant of shade, Megamax®049 is an ideal option for under tree lines, provided soil fertility is maintained.

Establishment

Seed can be drilled or broadcast and being a small seed, should be planted ideally at 5mm and no more than 1cm deep. Seed to soil contact is important. The use of press wheels or, on non-hard setting soils rolling after sowing, will greatly improve germination and establishment by providing ample seed to soil contact. Care should be taken not to plant in the hottest summer weather without adequate moisture – the seed must maintain close contact with wet soil for about 3–4 days to establish a seedling. Best sown into moist soil and a strong chance of follow up rain. The use of AgriCote coated seed will greatly improve the establishment success of Megamax®049 panic grass.

Fertiliser/nutrition

The use of AgriCote coated seed ensures essential macro and micronutrients are immediately available to the seedling. Responds to nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium. N and P fertiliser is recommended at sowing, banded away from the seed. A post-emergence application of 100–150kg/ha of urea in pure stands will assist in stimulating greater stand development. Maintenance fertiliser is needed for pure grass swards, especially in cut-and-carry systems. Inadequate N will lead to weakening of the stand and invasion by less desirable competitive species. Maintenance dressings of a minimum of 25–50kg/ha/year N are required to promote healthy, productive stands on less fertile soils. Soils with a pH <5 require addition of lime to raise soil pH above 5.5. A maintenance fertiliser program is recommended to replace nutrient removed by grazing or hay cutting over time, particularly at the high stocking densities. The incorporation of a companion legume can aid in the supply of panic grass N requirement. The use of a soil test will form the foundation of a suitable fertiliser program.

Growth habit

Erect, tussocky perennial that forms clumps. Megamax®049 is a short-medium panic grass type.

Compatibility (with other species)

Megamax®049 performs well in a sole stand or as part of a pasture mix. Grasses include Rhodes grass, Digitaria, Setaria and Bluegrasses. Combines well with legumes such as Burgundy bean, Siratro, Desmodium, Butterfly pea, Centro, Glycine, Coastal stylo, Desmanthus, Lucerne, Medic, Serradella and Clover.

Uses

Megamax®049 panic grass is an excellent option for high input, intensive grazing or hay cutting operations. Can be used as a permanent pasture or a short to medium term pasture ley.

Persistence

Megamax®049 is a strong perennial. All panic grasses require well drained soils and some form of rotational grazing to persist in the short to medium term. Poor persistence occurs in areas with a combination of both frequent frosts and cold, wet soils. Megamax®049 has demonstrated excellent persistence under extended dry conditions in production areas of northern WA and over winter on the south coast of Western Australia. This variety re-establishes quickly after long dry periods due to its robust root system. Being a prolific seed producer, regeneration from new seedlings will aid in persistence. Long term persistence is dependent on adequate nutrition, moisture and ideal grazing management.

Toxicity

Pure stands of panic grass can cause photosensitisation in some situations, while also causing colic if eaten too wet or in excess.

Management

The success of a pasture will depend on grazing management in the first season. Panic grass should not be grazed in the first year until plants become well established and ideally after an initial seed set and drop. Continuous heavy grazing of young regrowth can kill plants. The high palatability of panic grass often results in this species being preferentially grazed in favour of less palatable species in a pasture mix and as such, ideal grazing management will be required to ensure persistence is maintained. Withstands heavy grazing during good seasons but is inadvisable during dry periods as recovery is slowed. Heavy grazing is not advisable during autumn as plant mortality can occur due to frost. Susceptible to frequent, low cutting. Should not be cut or grazed below 30cm, ideally cut or grazed at 4 weekly intervals to obtain the best balance between quality and quantity.

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