

BANA GRASS

Windbreak & Fodder plant for Orchard & Animal

Pennisetum purpureum x P. americanum

Most tropical fruit trees require protection from wind to achieve best growth, increased fruit set and reduce skin blemish on fruits. For immediate wind protection, planting Bana grass around the perimeter of the orchard and between rows of fruit trees provides a fantastic windbreak within 4 months and by 6 months will reach its apex of 3m to 3.5m.

The Bana grass can withstand high winds due to its ability to flex & bend without significant damage.

Bana grass is a plant with a growth habit similar to sugar cane. It grows erect and retains the old dead leaves (trash) to form an effective wind screen.

The Bana grass hybrid was originally produced in South Africa as a stock food plant. Its parents are **Pennisetum purpureum - Elephant Grass** and **Pennisetum americanum - Pearl Millet**. Kikuyu grass, *Pennisetum clandestinum* is also in the same genus.

Planting

A reliable planting method is:

- (a) Mark out and plough a shallow drill (100 mm deep)
- (b) Apply a sprinkle of organic fertilizer to the row.
- (c) Select and trim planting cane and distribute canes end on end, along the drill.
- (d) Chop the cane into 30 mm lengths (2- 4 eyes) and either (i) cover with no more than 50 mm of soil (deeper planting may reduce germination), or (ii) position each piece of cane on an angle so that the lower end is covered with soil and the top eye is on the surface

Planting Conditions and After Care

To ensure best strike, resulting in an efficient windbreak, plant bana grass during warmer months when regular rain is about or irrigate at weekly intervals. Side dressings of a nitrogen fertilizer, (urea, sulphate of ammonia or similar) at a handful per metre of row 2-3 times a year and preferably while rain is about, will promote leaf growth.

Gaps in the row should be filled by planting extra cane as soon as possible. Bana grass roots develop quickly and if well-established will reduce the vigour of sets planted well after the gaps are obvious.

Slashing or cutting of the row of bana grass each year or two will rejuvenate and thicken the windbreak. Apply a handful of planting fertilizer per metre after cutting back to promote rapid regrowth.