How To Plant Beachgrass

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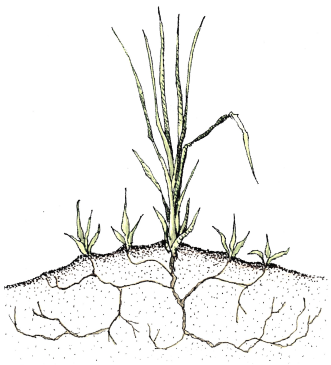
Coastal Habitat Restoration Team

American Beachgrass Characteristics

American beachgrass (*Ammophila breviligulata*) is the most common dune grass found in New Hampshire. A perennial grass native to the east coast, beachgrass is able to tolerate cool climates and salty conditions. Plants can grow to be 2-3 feet tall. Seeding happens in the fall, but seeds have a hard time establishing in a hot, dry environment. Therefore, most beachgrass growth occurs through spreading via an underground network of stems called rhizomes.



Underground network of roots and rhizomes in American beachgrass

Why American Beachgrass?

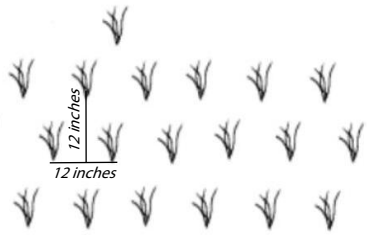
Beachgrass is a native, fast growing perennial grass that is well adapted to growing in the salty, sandy conditions of sand dunes. Both the above and below ground parts of the plant help to stabilize and build dunes. Beachgrass can quickly grow an extensive network of underground roots and rhizomes that stabilize the dune by binding the the sediments. Beachgrass leaves growing aboveground catch sand as it blows across the landscape and builds the dune as the sand grains are deposited at the base of the plant over time. As wind and wave action bury beachgrass plants in large amounts of sand, they thrive on being covered and respond by sending out new shoots and rhizomes to continue the dune-building process.

Supplies Needed

Beachgrass
Trowel or shovel
Gloves
Peat moss
Fertilizer

Planting Method

1. Dig a hole approximately 7-9 inches deep.
2. Toss a handful of peat moss and a pinch of fertilizer into the hole.
3. Plant two beachgrass stems in each hole. 1-2 inches of the stems should be buried.
4. Press the sand firmly around the base of the plant. Air pockets near roots may lead to plant death.
5. Dig the next hole approximately 12 inches away from the first, about the length of a trowel.
6. Stagger the rows. This allows the plants to trap blowing sand and build a dune.
7. Planting can occur from Fall through Spring, as long as sand is not frozen.



Beachgrass planting scheme with rows staggered and plantings 12 inches apart

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