Notes on cultivars of *Paspalum notatum*  
Based upon data provided by Helen Violi

Edited by Barry Rice  
Wildland Invasive Species Team  
The Nature Conservancy  
August 2003

*Paspalum notatum* (bahiagrass) is a wildland invasive species established in the USA. Several cultivar names have been established for selections of this plant; this document lists some interesting facts about them. The information was provided to The Nature Conservancy’s Wildland Invasive Species Team (TNC WIST) by Helen Violi. For more information on *Paspalum notatum*, refer to the WIST web site at [http://tncweed.ucdavis.edu](http://tncweed.ucdavis.edu).

Cultivar names frequently encountered for *Paspalum notatum* include ‘Argentine’, ‘Competidor’, ‘Paraguayan’, ‘Paraguay-22’, ‘Common’, ‘Paraguayan’, ‘Argentine’, ‘Pensicola’, ‘Tifton-9’, and ‘Wilmington’. These names are usually applied to selections of *Paspalum notatum* var. *notatum* and *Paspalum notatum* var. *saurae*. However, the application of the cultivar epithets to infraspecific ranks of *Paspalum notatum* is inconsistent. For example, ‘Tifton-9’ was registered as a cultivar of “*P. notatum* subsp. *saurae*”, instead of the correct Latin name *Paspalum notatum* var. *saurae* (Burton, 1989).

The two tables below summarize some important characters of several *Paspalum notatum* cultivars. After the tables, additional information on each cultivar is noted. Although the morphological differences between these cultivars seem slight, there are phenological differences that may make correct identification useful.

### Table 1. Morphological characteristics of *Paspalum notatum* cultivars (from Baker, 1996).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultivar</th>
<th>Growth habit</th>
<th>Leaf fold angle</th>
<th>Leaf blade width (1) (mm)</th>
<th>Leaf blade length (2) (cm)</th>
<th>Raceme length (3) (cm)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pensacola</td>
<td>Upright</td>
<td>90°</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tifton-9</td>
<td>Upright</td>
<td>90°</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>40.8</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argentine</td>
<td>Prostrate</td>
<td>120°</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common</td>
<td>Prostrate</td>
<td>Leaves flat</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraguayan</td>
<td>Prostrate</td>
<td>120°</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>30.1</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) Measured 10 cm above the collar of the leaf.  
(2) Measured from leaf collar to top of leaf blade.  
(3) Measured from tip of raceme to junction of both racemes.

### Table 2. Chromosome numbers of *Paspalum notatum* cultivars (from Quarin et al., 1984).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultivar</th>
<th><em>P. notatum</em> variety</th>
<th>Ploidy</th>
<th>Reproduction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pensacola</td>
<td>var. <em>saurae</em></td>
<td>diploid (2n=20)</td>
<td>sexually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tifton-9</td>
<td>var. <em>saurae</em></td>
<td>diploid (2n=20)</td>
<td>sexually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argentine</td>
<td>var. <em>notatum</em></td>
<td>tetraploid (2n=40)</td>
<td>apomixis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common</td>
<td>var. <em>notatum</em></td>
<td>tetraploid (2n=40)</td>
<td>apomixis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraguayan</td>
<td>var. <em>notatum</em></td>
<td>tetraploid (2n=40)</td>
<td>apomixis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilmington</td>
<td></td>
<td>tetraploid (2n=40)</td>
<td>apomixis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Notes on Specific Cultivars

‘Pensacola’
‘Pensacola’ is a commonly planted cultivar in Florida (Baker, 1996). It was originally selected in 1941 by Escambia County agent Ed Findlayson from plants growing near ship docks in Pensacola, Florida (Baker, 1996). The University of Florida promoted its use because it has higher vigor and is more productive than ‘Common’ bahiagrass (Scott, 1920). Burton (1946, in Baker, 1996) implied that ‘Pensacola’ bahiagrass was very similar to ‘Argentine’, but these two cultivars have different chromosome numbers. Most of the approximately 1.0 million hectares of bahiagrass in Florida is ‘Pensacola’ (Mislevy et al., 1991). This and ‘Argentine’ are the most commonly planted cultivars in the coastal plain soil areas of Louisiana (Scott, 1920).

‘Tifton-9’
‘Tifton’ is a commonly planted cultivar in Florida (Baker, 1996) and is becoming increasingly popular in Florida due to a higher annual forage yield, higher seedling vigor and a higher frost tolerance as compared to the ‘Pensacola’ and ‘Argentine’ cultivars (Chambliss, 1991a). It also has a higher germination rate, and produces seed that is more tolerant of drought conditions than ‘Argentine’ (Busey, 1992; Mullahey et al., 1996).

‘Argentine’
‘Argentine’ is another commonly planted cultivar in Florida (Baker, 1996) and was introduced by the USDA in 1945 (Baker, 1996). This and ‘Pensacola’ are the most commonly planted cultivars in the coastal plain soil areas of Louisiana (Scott, 1920). ‘Argentine’ seedheads are significantly damaged by ergot (Fusarium spp. and Claviceps paspali), but this has not been documented as prevalent in other cultivars in the U.S. (Chambliss, 1991b).

‘Common’
‘Common’ is a commonly planted cultivar in Florida (Baker, 1996). The first stand of this cultivar in Florida was documented in 1914, and was observed to spread beyond the planting areas in less than seven months. Scott (1920), a researcher on this project, wrote that “…a large number of individual plants have sprung up adjacent to the planting, indicating that the seed has been scattered by the cattle, birds, or wind.”

‘Paraguayan’
‘Paraguayan’ is also a commonly planted cultivar in Florida (Baker, 1996) and it was introduced at the Georgia Coastal Plain Experimental Station by the USDA in 1947 (Baker, 1996).

‘Wilmington’
Originally selected in 1940 from a stand of plants growing in a North Carolina ship yard (Baker, 1996), ‘Wilmington’ is the most common cultivar found in the northern extent of its USA range, i.e the Carolinas and Virginia (Watson and Burton, 1985).

References