Little Barley Seed Increase and Advanced Evaluation

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Little barley is one of the most common cool-season, annual grasses found across Texas and most of the United States. Growing up to 14 inches tall, this short grass species is readily found amongst spring wildflowers and in heavily degraded or overgrazed areas across various soil types. These characteristics could prove to be of great value for cool season restoration projects.

In early 2013, 33 accession of little barley were propagated in a greenhouse and then transplanted into 5 irrigated research sites across South, Central, and West Texas. Monthly plant evaluation data and germination testing results of seed collected from these transplants provided data to select 4 accessions with superior traits for restoration use. In early 2014, the seed from the original collections these 4 accessions was grown in a greenhouse and then transplanted into irrigated and isolated seed increase plots at the Texas A&M AgriLife Research Center in Stephenville, TX. An advanced evaluation plot was also planted in Kingsville, TX. Regular irrigation will be provided to the seed increase plots to encourage growth and maximum seed production. Seed produced will be harvested, cleaned, and utilized for further testing and increase.

This process will lead to larger seed production blocks and eventually a named and certified release for commercial production of seed for use by consumers. Little barley may benefit TXDOT roadside re-vegetation projects by providing quick cool season cover and erosion control, but that will also allow for wildflower displays.

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