

Bluegrass for habitat restoration *by Frin Ross*

Bluegrass (Poa alopecurus) is so cool! It can grow on beaches, in meadows and up mountains. Sometimes its leaves are blue, other times they turn whole mountains pink.

In 1847 the Victorian botanist Sir Joseph Hooker pronounced bluegrass to be "most abundant" in the Falklands and described it as being both near the sea and up into the hills. The grass is a favourite food of sheep and cattle, and since that time bluegrass habitat has been much reduced.

Falklands Conservation used bluegrass tillers to help restore sandy areas behind Surf Bay when landmines were removed and seedy trials (described in our last magazine) showed that bluegrass can grow on poor sandy and clay soils – making it a potential restoration super hero! Since then the Evans Family have grown bluegrass on eroded clay patches at Spring Point Farm, and at Dunbar Farm the Deligniers have planted bluegrass amongst marram (*Ammophila arenaria*).

Falklands Conservation have recently produced a leaflet to share tips for getting bluegrass growing. We hope that that it will encourage more folk to experiment with bluegrass and share their findings and are especially keen to find out if bluegrass can tolerate carefully managed rotational grazing by sheep and cattle.

Watch this space....

Bluegrass is native to the Falklands (and the southern cone of South America). If you are lucky enough to live in, or visit, the Falklands you can easily see great bluegrass in these places:

- Sea Lion Island.
- Close to Stanley, around Surf Bay and the Cape Pembroke lighthouse.
- Falklands Conservation's Native Plant Garden at Jubilee Villas.
- Cape Dolphin Farm and Bull Point (East Falkland).
- The Patricia Luxton Nature Reserve (West Falkland) 🐾

Coastal bluegrass (with sea cabbage), Surf Bay



Mountain bluegrass, Mt Adam, West Falkland.



Planting after demining, Surf Bay.



Bluegrass growing through sheep skins, Spring Point Farm.



BLUEGRASS INFORMATION

If you would like more information on the use of bluegrass for habitat restoration, including a copy of our leaflet please contact Frin Ross (habitatsrestore@conservation.org.fk or phone 00 500 22247).