



Gatton Panic



Gatton Panic is a **palatable** tufted summer-growing perennial grass growing to 1.5m. The Panics, including Green and Gatton Panic are widely adapted and require a minimum of 600mm of annual rainfall. With good moisture, Gatton Panic will persist as a permanent pasture and makes a good **mix with lucerne** or other legumes.

The Panics are **shade tolerant** and thrive under tree-cover, so are particularly useful in partly cleared country and as a pioneer species. Gatton Panic responds better than Buffel or Rhodes grass to warm weather in the cooler months and its well branched root system allows rapid growth after light showers. Consequently, it produces **earlier spring feed** than many other tropical grasses. Panic or panic-legume pastures can make good hay if cut when the grass is coming into flower, however the Panics contain oxalates so are not suitable for horse pastures.

Gatton Panic persists best on fertile, friable soils and light clays, but is **widely adapted** growing on heavier textured soils in low rainfall areas as well as lighter textured soils in wet coastal or tableland areas receiving over 1700mm. It does not do well on deep sands or on heavy black cracking clay soils.

Gatton Panic can be distinguished from the related Green Panic by its longer, broader, hairless leaves, whereas Green Panic's lighter green foliage has hairy lower leaves and stems. Of the two, Gatton panic is superior on low-fertility soils and is established more reliably, but is less shade tolerant. It is thought to be slightly more palatable to stock than Green Panic

Planting

Weed control is important for establishment. Panic can be planted between October and late February, but mid-summer planting is most successful as weed competition is lowest and the chance of regular rainfall is greatest. A fallowed and cultivated seed-bed with good subsoil moisture is preferable. In less than ideal conditions, use a higher seeding rate. Single species sowing rates range between 2-4 kg/ha and 1-2 kg/ha in a mix. Suitable companion species for Central Queensland conditions include rhodes grass, lucerne and siratro. Seed can be broadcast onto the seedbed followed by a light disturbance or drilled no deeper than 5-10mm. On non-crusting soils, rollers or presswheels will improve seed-soil contact and emergence.

Broadcasting seed into the ash soon after burning scrub can also be successful.



Maintenance

Successful establishment will depend on grazing management in the first year. The first grazing should not occur until seedlings have developed crowns, a strong root system and set some seed. In the first year grazing should be light and for short periods.

In a mixed pasture, Panic is often preferentially grazed. Animal production is better from short to medium growth than from older, stemmy growth so it is important to maintain a moderate amount of leaf without allowing it to become rank. This can be achieved either with a set stocking rate or by rotationally grazing at the correct stage of maturity. Rotational grazing (eg. 1-2 weeks with 4-8 weeks spell) is most suitable where a legume is included. Spell the pasture in late summer so it can set seed and avoid heavy grazing just before winter. Panic will survive burning.

Gatton Panic responds well to application of nitrogen, phosphorus and sulfur. Yellow foliage is a good indication of N deficiency.

Australian produced panic seed is exported to the Middle East, Japan, South America, South Africa and South East Asia.