

History of crested wheatgrass (*Agropyron*) in North America

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Crested wheatgrass is indigenous to the Steppe region of European Russia and southwestern Siberia. It was first introduced into North America in 1892 by N. E. Hansen of the South Dakota Experiment Station. Dr. Hansen obtained five accessions, designated PIs 835, 837, 838, 1010, and 1012, from Valuiki Experiment Station near what is now Volgograd, Russia. Although original seed of these introductions were distributed to agricultural experiment stations, no permanent plantings or seed increases were made. A second importation, consisting of five seedlots (PIs 19537 through 19541) labeled as *Agropyron desertorum* and one seedlot (PI-19536) labeled as *Agropyron cristatum*, was received by N. E. Hansen in 1906 from the Valuiki Experiment Station. This seed was distributed to 15 experiment stations. Research initiated with these accessions in 1915 by the USDA-ARS at Mandan, North Dakota led to the initial acceptance of crested wheatgrass in the northern Great Plains. The first introduction of the Siberian form of crested wheatgrass (*Agropyron fragile*) was received from Russia in 1910 as PI-28307. The contribution of crested wheatgrass was particularly notable during the early settlement of the northern Great Plains of the United States and Prairie Provinces of Canada and is credited with salvaging vast areas of deteriorated rangelands and abandoned cropland during the depression and "dustbowl" period of the 1930s. Crested wheatgrass rapidly spread from the Great Plains to other semiarid regions and has become one of the most important range grasses in North America where is an effective biological suppressor of cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*).