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(12) **United States Plant Patent**
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(54) **YELLOW INDIANGRASS PLANT NAMED**
‘THIN MAN’

(50) Latin Name: *Sorghastrum nutans*
Varietal Denomination: **Thin Man**

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patent is extended or adjusted under 35
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(52) **U.S. Cl.**
USPC **Plt./384**

(58) **Field of Classification Search**
None
See application file for complete search history.

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

‘Thin Man’ is a new and distinct plant variety of *Sorghastrum nutans*, more commonly known as yellow indiagrass or simply indiagrass. The new variety has blue foliage coloration instead of the more common green coloration; with a growth habit exhibiting an upright and tightly growing vegetation with apical flowering; and exceptional drought and heat tolerance.

2 Drawing Sheets

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Latin name of the genus and species of the plant claimed:
The ornamental plant variety of this invention is botanically
identified as *Sorghastrum nutans*.

Variety denomination: The variety denomination is ‘Thin
Man’.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to a new and distinct plant
variety of *Sorghastrum nutans*, more commonly known as
yellow indiagrass or simply indiagrass. The new variety
has blue foliage coloration instead of the more common
green coloration; an upright and tightly growing vegetative
and flowering growth habit; and exceptional drought and
heat tolerance.

Particularly in Southwestern United States, prolonged
drought conditions and extended periods of extreme heat
temperatures have expanded the commercial market for
attractive, drought-tolerant, and vigorous ornamental plants.
An important species for habitat, the tall foliage offers cover
for birds and small animals and seed heads provide a food
source for songbirds and insects.

The original plant of ‘Thin Man’ was discovered on Aug.
30, 2007 in Los Lunas in Valencia County, N. Mex. in the
United States. ‘Thin Man’ was found in a cultivated field of
Sorghastrum nutans called ‘Llano’ (unpatented). ‘Llano’
was developed from plants of eastern New Mexico provenance
primarily for forage and pasture use. These plants were
grown for commercial seed production. There were no
other plants in the cultivated area. ‘Thin Man’ is the result
of the cross pollination of ‘Llano’ in this cultivated area and
is a chance genetic variation. It was selected for its visibly
tighter growth habit and denser foliage than the surrounding
grasses.

On the same day of discovery, the plant was transported,
divided and replanted into several #5 “gallon” pots and
cultivated in a greenhouse located in Santa Fe, N. Mex. The
original plants were then transplanted into a trial garden

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bed in the same nursery where they were observed for
approximately 18 months. Propagation via crown division
began in the summer of 2009 under the direction of the
inventor of the present invention. Field-grown plants were
divided in late spring and potted into nursery pots. Testing
was repeated in professional nursery settings in Santa Fe, N.
Mex. and Fort Collins, Colo. Propagation testing continued
through three generations and testing demonstrated the
distinct characteristics described herein. These characteris-
tics are true-to-type and transmissible by asexual reproduc-
tion with uniformity and stability.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The following traits represent the characteristics of the
new variety ‘Thin Man’. These traits in combination distin-
guish this variety from all other commercial varieties known
to the inventor.

- 1. Blue foliage coloration;
- 2. Habit displaying an upright, tightly growing vegetation
with apical flowering growth;
- 3. Exceptional drought tolerance; and
- 4. Exceptional heat tolerance.

Plant Breeder’s Rights for this variety have not been
applied for and ‘Thin Man’ has not been offered for sale
more than a year before the filing date of this application.
‘Thin Man’ has not been promoted under any other breeder’s
reference or cultivar name.

Plants of ‘Thin Man’ have not been observed under all
possible environmental and cultural conditions. The pheno-
type may vary somewhat with variations in environmental
conditions, for example, with fluctuation in temperature, soil
chemistry, and photoperiod without, however, any variance
in genotype.

**BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE
PHOTOGRAPH(S)**

The accompanying colored photographs illustrate the
overall, typical appearance of the new and distinct yellow

indiangrass plant showing the colors as true as it is reasonably possible to obtain in colored reproductions of conventional photography. Due to color variation reproduced in the photographs, color characteristics of this new variety should be determined with reference to the observations described herein, rather than a reliance on the photographs alone. Photographs were taken outdoors on Sep. 1, 2015 of a three-year-old plant. The different photographs are intended to represent the distinctive characteristics of 'Thin Man'.

FIG. 1, demonstrates growth habit and overall appearance of the invention.

FIG. 2 is a close up view of the flower spikes and leaves of the same plant.

DETAILED BOTANICAL DESCRIPTION

The following is a detailed description of the new variety 'Thin Man'. Characteristic data was collected in the Fall of 2016. The color determinations are in accordance with the 2007 edition of The Royal Horticultural Society Colour Chart published by The Royal Horticultural Society (London, England), except where general color terms of ordinary dictionary significance are used and color readings were observed under natural, outdoor light.

VARIETY DESCRIPTION

Classification:

Botanical.—*Sorghastrum nutans*.

Common.—Yellow Indiangrass.

Parentage:

Female.—An improved pasture selection of *Sorghastrum nutans* 'Llano' (unpatented).

Male.—*Sorghastrum nutans* 'Llano' (unpatented).

Propagation: Crown divisions.

Plant:

Type.—Herbaceous perennial grass.

Ploidy.—Diploid.

Growth habit.—Dense upright tuft with flowering spikes held upright above the foliage.

Height, unpruned (average) (m).—1.4 m.

Spread (average) (cm).—46 to 60 cm.

Root description.—Fibrous and fine, deeply rooted. Root color: RHS 199A to 199C.

Life cycle duration.—Perennial.

Cold tolerance.—USDA 4 to 8.

Optimal temperature range.—Very tolerant of a wide range of growing temperatures including triple digit summer heat and subzero winter cold.

Culm (stem): Cylindrical, hollow pith, thin but strong, and erect.

Number (average).—40, forming a tight clump.

Size (average).—3.0 mm in diameter and 90.0 cm in height (from the base to the base of the peduncle).

Surface.—Glabrous, smooth, and lightly striate and glaucous near nodes.

Color (during summer and fall).—RHS182A to 182C and lightly suffused with 150D (sun exposed portion of culm) and RHS150D (shade side).

Internode.—Length (average) (cm): 27.0 cm.

Leaf:

Leaves per culm (average).—3 on flowering culms.

Leaf shape.—Narrowly lanceolate.

Leaf division.—Simple.

Leaf margin.—Entire, scaberulose.

Leaf base.—Sheathed to base of the node.

Leaf venation.—Parallel, not distinguishable in color from leaf coloration.

Leaf width.—An average of 8.0 mm at widest section.

Leaf length (average) (cm).—Blade: 35.0 cm. Sheathed portion: 18.0 cm.

Leaf color.—Blend between RHS 138A and 139B (upper and lower surfaces).

Ligule.—Hairy type with fine hairs. Height (average) (mm): 2.5 mm. Width (average) (mm): 4.0 mm en masse. Color: RHS 155B.

Inflorescence: Slender, upright, freely branched panicle at terminus of stem, with paired spikelets.

Blooming period.—Late summer to fall (as observed in Santa Fe, N. Mex., United States located at 35.6870° N, 105.9378° W).

Number.—One per culm.

Size (average) (cm).—Length (cm): 25.0 cm. Width (cm): 3.0 cm.

Color.—Panicles en masse RHS 161A to 161B.

Spikes.—Number (average): 200 per panicle. Shape: Elliptic. Length (average) (mm): 7.0 mm. Width (average) (mm): 1.5 mm.

AWN.—Present. Length (average) (cm): 1.7 cm. Color: Bend between RHS 161A and 175B.

Lemma.—Shape: Elliptic. Apex: Acute. Truncate base: Glabrous, smooth, glossy surface. Length (average) (mm): 6.0 mm. Width (average) (mm): 1.0 mm. Color: RHS 165B to 165C.

Glumes.—Symmetrical and feather-like with many thread-like hairs feathering out from a central axis. Shape: Elliptic. Surface: Translucent and glossy. Length (average) (mm): 6.0 mm. Width (average) (mm): 0.7 mm. Color: RHS NN155D.

Rachis.—Length (average) (cm): 40.0 cm (from last leaf). Panicle portion: Length (average) (cm): 24.0 cm. Width (average) (mm): 1.2 mm. Surface: Glabrous, smooth. Color: Blend between RHS158A and 181D. Lateral branches: Peduncle-like. Number (average): 5 bunches of 4 peduncle-like branches spaced evenly along the rachis. Surface: Glabrous, smooth. Length (average) (cm): 5.5 cm (shortest at the terminus). Width (average) (mm): 0.2 mm. Color: Blend between 161C and 181B.

Pedicel.—Very fine and wiry. Surface: Glabrous, smooth. Length (average) (mm): 5.0 mm. Width (average) (mm): 0.1 mm. Color: RHS 161C to 161D.

Reproductive organs:

Androecium.—Stamen Number: 3. Length (average) (mm): 4.5 mm. Width (average) (mm): 0.3 mm. Anthers: Basifixed on very fine, translucent filaments. Color: RHS 155A. Pollen: Not present.

Gynoecium.—Pistil: 1 to 2 plumose stigmas on short fine styles. Length (average) (mm): 1.5 mm. Width (average) (mm): 0.5 mm. Color: RHS NN155B. Ovary: Unilocular, superior. Shape: Oval. Length (average) (mm): 1.0 mm. Width (average) (mm): 0.5 mm. Color: RHS 163C.

Best mode growing conditions:

Soil conditions.—Grows well in clay, loam, silt, loam soil conditions.

Water use/drought tolerance.—Drought tolerant when planted in the ground.

Fertilization.—Propagation: Use standard water soluble 15-15-15 or similar formulation every week to two weeks during growing season. Landscape

cultivation: Top dressing of garden/landscape plants in fall with a blend of compost and good quality natural/organic fertilizer.

COMPARISON TO SIMILAR VARIETIES

In comparison to Parents (both unpatented), 'Thin Man' has a visibly tighter growth habit and denser foliage.

In comparison to the commercially available variety of *Sorghastrum nutans* named 'Indian Steel' (unpatented), 'Thin Man' is slightly taller; and its mature form is more uniform, both in height and width; the blue foliage coloration is more uniform in 'Thin Man'. The genetics in 'Thin Man' are more xeric and heat tolerant due to its origination in the western United States climate. Further, 'Thin Man' is propagated by crown division, whereas, 'Indian Steel' is propagated via seed.

The comparison variety to 'Thin Man' is the commercially available variety of *Sorghastrum nutans* named 'Sioux

Blue' (unpatented), which was introduced by Longwood Gardens, Kennet Square, Pa. and was selected as a seedling of variety 'Osage'. The growth habit of the stems and foliage are more upright for 'Thin Man'. The genetics in 'Thin Man' are more xeric and heat tolerant due to its origination in the western United States climate of eastern New Mexico, which is drier and hotter than where variety 'Osage' originated in Oklahoma and Kansas.

'Thin Man' differs from the commercially available *Sorghastrum nutans* named 'Cheyenne' in that 'Thin Man' has very blue foliage compared to the green foliage of 'Cheyenne', is more uniform in mature size (both height and width), and is propagated by crown divisions, not via seed as is the case of 'Cheyenne'.

I claim:

1. A new and distinct variety of yellow indiagrass as described and illustrated herein.

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FIG. 1



FIG. 2