Reclaim salty soils with bluebush

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Reclaim Salty Soils with

BLUEBUSH (Kochia brevifolia) is an Australian plant which can produce good yields of excellent feed when grown on well drained salty soils in the 12 to 15-inch rainfall districts of Western Australia.

From salty soils which are unreliable for cereals or annual pastures, bluebush will yield annually at least 5 cwt. per acre of material containing over 20 per cent. protein, and this is available in summer and autumn when it is most needed.

Bluebushes produce seed in abundance, but seed may also be purchased from some stock firms. Establishment from seed is sometimes poor, but fortunately the young bushes seed in the first year and good natural spread occurs with a little encouragement and protection.

The seeds of bluebush are about as big and as heavy as a piece of tissue paper the size of a threepenny piece. They ripen on the bush and may easily be dislodged by wind or sheep.

Since the seeds are so light they flutter on the slightest breeze and are moved around until they strike some obstruction. Unfortunately most salt-affected soils are very smooth and windswept and provide very poor catching ground for windblown seeds.

Several different cultivation methods may be used for seed trapping, and so long as a rough surface is provided the method used is not important. Roughening may be carried out in summer or winter.

Seeds may also be trapped in hay, sticks, or brush.

These pictures show how you can encourage the rapid spread of bluebush on salt-affected land.
The seeds, which are almost black when mature, are shed in great numbers. They are very light and blow until they lodge against some obstruction. Here seed has been shaken onto the ground near a bush.

Remains of baled hay left by sheep fed on this bare salt area have caught bluebush seed. A good growth of seedlings can be seen in the hay in the foreground and middle distance. The area was protected from grazing.

The light papery seeds may be caught in furrows. These lines of bluebush grew from seed which blew across the bare salty soil, and caught in the furrows. The area was not grazed.
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