

Orchardgrass

Orchardgrass is a perennial, tall growing cool season bunchgrass that has excellent quality when properly managed. It is well suited to renovation with legumes.

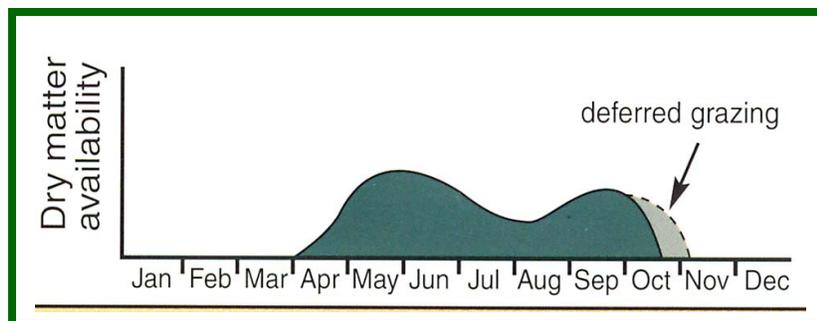
- Less tolerant of drought/ poor drainage than endophyte infected tall fescue
- Less persistence in the eastern Piedmont and Coastal Plain (2 to 4 years)
 - high humidity and long summers promote leaf diseases
 - presence of nematodes in sandy soils

Consequently, orchardgrass **requires** good management to capture its benefit.

- Rotationally graze with close attention to ending heights (3-4 inches)
- One to four day grazing periods with 20 to 35 day rest periods are best
- Does best on well drained, loam soil



Physical characteristics of orchardgrass



Generalized growth curve – varies with location

Source for graphics and photos: [A Guide to the Common Forages and Weeds of Pastures](#), MU Extension, University of Missouri - Columbia

Establishment:

pH: 5.8 – 6.2 for pure stand, higher with legumes (6.0 – 6.5 clovers, 6.5 – 7.0 alfalfa)

Fertility: P and K per soil test; 40-50 lbsN/Acre when seeded alone; 20 lbsN/Acre when seeded with legume

Rate: 8-12 lbs/A alone (VT Agronomy Handbook)
3-6 lbs/A in mixtures (VT Agronomy Handbook)
15-20 lbs/A alone (Southern Forages)

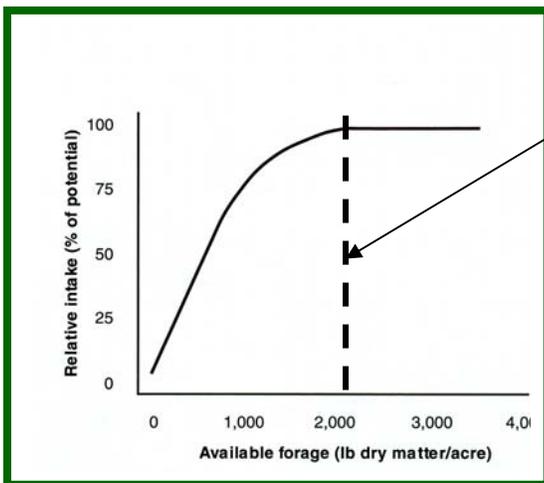
Date: Eastern VA – after first good rain in Sep to Oct 15 or during Feb or early March (only fall seed in Coastal Plain)
Piedmont and West of Blue Ridge – seed after first good rain in August to September 15 or March 1 – April 15

Management:

Grazing: Begin at 6 – 8 inches and end at 3 to 4 inches

Hay: Cut in boot to early head stage

Fertility: 120 – 200 lbs N/acre applied ½ early spring and ½ after first cutting
P and K per soil test
If over 35% legume, no nitrogen is needed



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four inches
to allow faster regrowth.

Plant reserves in stem base – do not graze below 3 to 4 inches to prevent damaging the stem base leave leaves for faster regrowth

Tillers



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