

Illinois Grazing Manual Fact Sheet
SPECIES • COOL-SEASON GRASSES

Kentucky Bluegrass



General Information

Kentucky bluegrass is a cool-season grass that was introduced from Europe. Because of its sod-forming ability, bluegrass is well suited for erosion control and recreational uses. Bluegrass is very compatible when grown with other grasses and legumes.

Adaptability

Bluegrass is adapted to well-drained, loamy or heavier textured soils. It does best in soils with a pH of 5.3 or higher that are of limestone origin.

Characteristics

Bluegrass grows one to two feet tall, reproducing both by budding and by seeding. The leaf blades are one-eighth-inch wide and four to eight inches long, tapering to a boat-shaped point. The leaves are on the stem in an alternating pattern. The seed head is open with three to five branches at each joint.

The base of the seed has a white, cotton-like material attached. The root system is fibrous with short rhizomes.

Establishment

Kentucky bluegrass should be planted during the normal cool-season seeding dates.

Check with the Natural Resources Conservation Service or University Extension for proper seeding rates.

The seedbed should be smooth, firm and free of weeds. The seed should be placed one-eighth to one-fourth inch deep.

When seed is broadcast, the soil needs to be at least 80% weed-free, rolled, seeded, and rolled again to ensure good seed to soil contact.

Management

Bluegrass is able to withstand the pressure of heavy grazing. If grazed excessively, though, plants may not recover.

When other species of grasses are grazed heavily, they die, enabling bluegrass to spread and eventually dominate the pasture.

Bluegrass provides excellent forage during the spring. During this lush growth period, it will have a protein content of 20 percent.



To improve forage yields, plant bluegrass with legumes such as ladino clover, Korean lespedeza, red clover, alfalfa and bird's-foot trefoil.

Bluegrass should not be grazed until it reaches a height of six inches, and it should not be grazed closer than three inches.

When bluegrass has been properly grazed, allow at least 21 days for it to recover before resuming grazing.

Lime and fertilizer should be applied according to a soil test. Bluegrass is recommended for grazing, but seldom is recommended for use as a hay crop.

Where to Get Help

For more information about Kentucky bluegrass, contact your local office of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, listed in the telephone directory under "U.S. Government," or the University of Illinois Extension.



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