



Conservation Practice Overview

October 2020

Pasture and Hay Planting (Code 512)

Pasture and hay planting is establishing adapted and compatible species, varieties, or cultivars of perennial herbaceous plants suitable for pasture or hay production.

Practice Information

This practice applies to all lands suitable for establishment of perennial species for pasture and hay production. This practice does not apply to establishment of annually planted and harvested food, fiber, or oilseed crops.



Pasture and hay planting can help improve or maintain livestock nutrition and/or health, provide or increase forage supply during periods of low forage production, reduce soil erosion, and improve water and air quality.

Considerations for plant species selection can include climatic conditions such as annual precipitation and its distribution, growing season length, temperature extremes, and the USDA Plant Hardiness Zone.

Soil condition and landscape position attributes, such as pH, available water holding capacity, aspect, slope, drainage class, fertility level, salinity, depth, flooding and ponding, and levels of phytotoxic elements may be important considerations. Resistance to disease and insects common to the site or location may also be important.

Planting rates, methods, and dates may be recommended from the NRCS Plant Materials Program, other NRCS technical documents, land grant and research institutions, and extension agencies. Land grant university field trials of various forages can be helpful in selecting forage species for planting, as well.

Refer to the local NRCS Field Office Technical Guide for information on cultural specifications for establishing and managing the species for the intended use.

Common Associated Practices

NRCS Conservation Practice Standard (CPS) Pasture and Hay Planting (Code 512) is commonly applied with other conservation practices, such as NRCS CPSs Forage Harvest Management (Code 511), Herbaceous Weed Treatment (Code 315), Nutrient Management (Code 590), Prescribed Grazing (Code 528), and Upland Wildlife Habitat Management (Code 645).

For further information, contact your local NRCS field office.