

**PLANTING WINTER ANNUAL
GRASSES
FOR FORAGE AND BIOMASS**

**MS-ECS-512-09 (JS)
June 2013**

Description: Winter annual grasses for Mississippi include ryegrass and cereal grains (rye, wheat, and oats). Both are bunchgrasses that grow to a height of 2 to 4 feet when mature.

Uses: For grazing, hay, temporary erosion control, and wildlife.

Soil adaptation: Adapted to a wide range of soils. Best suited to well drained soils. Rye is more adapted to poorly drained soils than are ryegrass, wheat, or oats.

Cultural Specifications

Method of planting: Seeding.

Seedbed preparation: Fallow, either by tillage or with burn-down chemicals, six weeks before planting then prepare a good firm seedbed to a depth of 4 or more inches and smooth the surface by harrowing or plant no-till. Can be sod seeded into summer grass sods. If sodseeding, graze the summer grasses to below two inches and sodseed in October.

Fertilizer and lime: Apply fertilizer and lime according to Extension Service Soils Lab recommendations or the attached nutrient budget. Incorporate into the top 2 or 3 inches of the soil. Apply lime and fertilizer in separate operations.

Planting time: Plant ryegrass between September 1 and November 30. Plant cereal grains between September 1 and October 31.

Planting rate: Drill 25 pounds of ryegrass seed per acre or broadcast 40 pounds of seed per acre. Broadcast or drill 120 pounds of cereal grain seeds per acre. When planting cereal grains with ryegrass, reduce the cereal grain seeding rate to 90 pounds of seed per acre.

Planting depth: Plant seeds 1/2 to 1 inch deep and cultipack.

Plant establishment: Do not graze until the plants are a minimum of 8 inches high. Do not graze below 3 inches.

Plant management and maintenance: Apply fertilizer and lime according to Extension Service Soils Lab recommendations or the attached nutrient budget. Do not overgraze. Grazing closer than 3 inches in cold weather badly damages the stand and slows regrowth. Planting clovers such as crimson, red, or ball with the winter grasses will improve forage quality and reduce the amount of nitrogen needed.

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