

# Orchardgrass

## DESCRIPTION

Orchardgrass usually develops distinct clumps and flower culms 15 to 18 inches tall. Leaves are usually less than 12 inches in height. When grown under irrigation or in more moist situations, it attains a height of 24-28 inches. No vegetative spread has been observed.

Orchardgrass is one of the earliest species to grow in the spring, making tremendous growth during cool conditions. Due to deep roots, it also is capable of strong summer growth when conditions are favorable. Orchardgrass has 416,000 seeds per pound.

Orchardgrass performs best in a pH range of 5.8-7.0.

## ESTABLISHMENT

A clean, firm, weed-free seedbed is recommended. Range and erosion control seedings should be made in the late fall or very early spring. Do not seed after the spring moisture period is well advanced or a failure may occur because of drought and hot summer conditions before the grass is well established. A deep furrow or range drill with press wheels may be used; Orchardgrass is easily established with grain drills or by broadcasting seeding. Seed at 1/2 inch.

## MANAGEMENT

Rotational grazing is best for production, persistence and quality. Fields should be grazed heavily and frequently during the spring, but do not overgraze. Leave a 3- to 4-inch stubble so plants can recover quickly. Heavy grazing during the late fall should be avoided to prevent depletion of root reserves. Under dry land conditions, Orchardgrass should not be grazed until late summer or fall of the second growing season. The plants may be severely damaged by overgrazing especially in the seedling year. Use no more than 60% of the annual growth during the winter season or 50% during the growing season. This plant responds well to rotational grazing systems. Orchardgrass responds to good fertility management. One strategy, to even out the forage production, is to fertilize the stand after the first and second cutting or grazing to boost late spring and summer production. Apply fertilizer based upon soil tests.

### ORCHARDGRASS CHARACTERISTICS

ESTABLISHMENT	<b>MED</b>
PERSISTENCE	<b>HIGH</b>
DROUGHT TOLERANCE	<b>MED</b>
WINTER HARDINESS	<b>HIGH</b>
PALATABILITY	<b>HIGH</b>
YIELD POTENTIAL	<b>HIGH</b>
GRAZING TOLERANCE	<b>MED</b>

### PLANTING TIMES

**SPRING PLANTING** MAR - MAY

**FALL PLANTING** AUG - SEP

LIFE CYCLE PERENNIAL

### SEEDING RATE (LBS/ACRE)

ALONE 15 - 25

MIXES 3 - 10

EMERGENCE (DAYS) 7 - 21

### ROTATIONAL GRAZING

BEGIN (IN) 8 - 12

STOP (IN) 4 - 6

AVERAGE DAYS REST 15 - 30

### HARVEST MANAGEMENT

**HARVEST AT BOOT STAGE IN SPRING;  
CUT OR GRAZE FREQUENTLY IN  
SPRING & EARLY SUMMER (CUTTING  
FREQUENCY INFLUENCED BY  
TEMPERATURE, SOIL MOISTURE &  
FERTILITY)**



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