

GRASSES

BLUEGRASS, KENTUCKY: A cool-season grass which originated from Europe and has naturalized in many drainages and higher moisture sites in Colorado. It is an aggressive sod-former and very palatable. Needs irrigation or subirrigation to maintain summer growth, or it will go dormant after daily maximum temperatures reach 90 degrees F. Regrows in fall. Stems are one to two feet tall, with leaves two to seven inches long. Seed one to five pounds per acre with legume.

Use for Hay: Below average because of low growing leaves.

Use for Pasture: Provides good grazing and tolerates trampling. Overgrazing or undergrazing bluegrass for short periods is not harmful. Keep between a height of 2 and 6 inches. Crude protein may be 20% in the spring, but 10% at maturity.

Planting Rate: 2-3 pounds pure live seed per acre

Variety: 'Troy'

BLUESTEM, BIG: A native warm-season grass which grows three to six feet in height. Leaves grow 4 to 20 inch long. Known as "turkey-foot" because of the arrangement of the three seed heads that occur at the top of stalks, it is slightly sod-forming with adaptability to moist soils. Plant on dryland sites, although it responds fairly well to irrigation.

Use for Hay: Makes good hay if cut before stemmy seed heads are formed.

Use for Pasture: Big bluestem is tough and unpalatable after maturity. Otherwise it is relished by all livestock classes to a fault; if not managed well, it quickly will be grazed out of pastures. Stop grazing when stubble is down to an eight- or ten-inch height if continuously grazed. Graze down to six inches if adequate regrowth time is allowed.

Planting Rate: 7 pounds pure live seed per acre

Varieties: 'Pawnee', and 'Champ' from Nebraska, and 'Kaw' from Kansas.

BLUESTEM, LITTLE: A native warm-season grass which grows 18 to 40 inches tall. Leaves are 3 to 10 inches long. It is a bunchgrass with good adaptability to most soils. Plant on dryland sites receiving 14 inches or more precipitation.

Use for Hay: Yields 0.75 to 2.0 tons per acre.

Use for Pasture: It has less palatability than big bluestem which allows for somewhat more relaxed grazing management. Do not graze below a four-inch height. Manage for six- to eight-inch stubble when continuously grazed. Not preferred after heads appear. Not preferred by sheep.

Planting Rate: 3-4 pounds pure live seed per acre

Varieties: 'Pastura': from a low rainfall area in New Mexico; seed heads less fuzzy, 'Cimarron': from southwest Kansas, 'Blaze': leafy, late-maturing, and 'Camper'

BLUESTEM, SAND: A native warm-season grass which grows three to eight feet tall. Leaves grow 8 to 12 inches long. It is adaptable primarily to sandy soils; it ties these soils down well with its sod-forming growth habit. Can look like a bunchgrass.

Use for Hay: It can be a high hay producer with other sandhill grasses.

Use for Pasture: Do not graze below a six- to eight-inch height; ten to twelve inches if continuously grazed. Sand bluestem surprisingly does not take heavy trampling well.

Planting Rate: 7-8 pounds pure live seed per acre

Varieties: 'Garden': from panhandle of Nebraska; vigorous, tall and leafy, 'Elida': from east central New Mexico, recommended for 14-inch or more precipitation areas, released in 1963, 'Woodward': from Oklahoma panhandle, released in 1955.

BROME, MEADOW: A cool-season grass which originated in Eurasia. It is a bunchgrass with short rhizomes. It grows from 24 to 48 inches tall and is very palatable. Adapted to irrigated sites with silt to clay soil. A relatively slow establisher, but seedlings are strong. Highly desired by livestock and wildlife.

A good competitor, but not as aggressive as smooth brome. Because of its large number of basal leaves, it recovers faster than smooth brome from haying or grazing.

Use for Hay: Compared to smooth brome, it has a better leaf to stem ratio, better fall regrowth, and a maturity seven to ten days earlier. Because of the latter, it is not as compatible with alfalfa for hay. Heads have longer awns than smooth brome. Most appear in the first cutting and the first two years after establishment. Winter hardiness is better than some other irrigated grasses, like orchardgrass. Allow six inches of fall regrowth before a killing frost.

Use for Pastures: Begin grazing meadow brome at an eight- to twelve-inch height, and leave a three- to four-inch stubble. Allow three to four weeks of regrowth. Graze down to a six- to eight- inch height if continuously grazed.

Planting Rate: 10-12 lbs. pure live seed per acre

Varieties: 'Regar': earlier heading than 'Manchar' smooth brome; has good regrowth after cutting.