

COUCH GRASS (CENCHRUS DACTYLON)

BERMUDA

OVERVIEW

Grows in sandy soil amongst cultivated crops into a grass suitable for grazing and fodder production. BERMUDA grass has consistently proven to be the best perennial grass for irrigated summer pastures but used mainly for lawns. More recently stockmen have shown considerable interest as a source of green forage and hay. This interest has been sparked by the development of tall-growing varieties and improved growing practices.

WHERE TO USE

BERMUDA is suited for commercial pasture or hay production in areas where (1) land and water costs are relatively low, (2) total soluble salts in water tend to restrict production of other crops, and (3) BERMUDA is also a practical choice for small pasture plots where a home owner wants to keep one or two horses and/or pasture a few head of cattle.

YIELD

BERMUDA normally can be pastured or harvested from mid-April until frost time in November. Over this seven-month period, a planting generally can carry one to two horses, two to five head of 400 to 600 pound beef cattle, or 2 to 3 cows and calves per acre. Growing cattle will gain about 1/2 to 1 pound per day, if no additional feed is provided.

Hay yields run from 5 to 10 tons per acre a season, harvested in about 6 cuttings. When properly fertilized, irrigated and harvested, bermudagrass hay has a feeding value about equal to alfalfa hay in terms of total digestible nutrients (TDN), but has less digestible protein.

- Yields from 5 to 10 tons per acre
- Grows in sandy soils
- Suitable for grazing and fodder production



ESTABLISHING A STAND

To establish a stand, broadcast the seed at a rate of 10 to 20 pounds per acre. Or seed can be drilled in 20-inch rows with vegetable planting equipment at the rate of 10 pounds per acre. When drilling, it is best to plant in dry seed bed and irrigate-up, unless the soil is disked first to kill germinated weed seed.

Planting depth is extremely important. For best results seed should be planted as near 1/4 inch deep as possible. Do not plant too deep. It is a good practice to apply a light irrigation (or after planting in a moist seedbed). This keeps the soil from crusting and the seed moist. It will be about 90 days from date of planting until first harvest. Do not mow or graze closer than 1-1/2 inches during the first 2 or 3 harvests.

FERTILIZATION

BERMUDA is a heavy and efficient user of nitrogen. Up to 300 pounds of actual nitrogen per acre per year can be used. This should be applied 3 to 4 uniform application of 75 to 80 pounds per acre. The first application should be made in early March as the grass begins to turn green, and the last application in late August or early September.