

SEEDED BERMUDAGRASSES AND THEIR ESTABLISHMENT

G. W. Evers

Current Information. There is a great deal of interest in planting seeded bermudagrasses as opposed to sprigs of the vegetative hybrids. In addition to being less expensive and not as burdensome as sprigging, seeded bermudagrasses can be used on small acreages that are not economical to sprig, on steep slopes susceptible to erosion if plowed, and cut-over timberland where good seedbed preparation necessary for sprigging is not feasible. Most seeded bermudagrasses on the market are blends that may contain common, giant, and/or other varieties and selections. Components of some of the blends on the market today are reported in Table 1.

Table 1. Components of some available seeded bermudagrass blends.

Trade name	Components
Pasto Rico	common, giant
Texas Tough Plus	common, giant, Majestic
Pasture Supreme	common, giant
Tierra Verde	common, giant
Ranchero Frio	Cheyenne, Mohawk, giant
Sungrazer 777	Jackpot, KF194, CD90160
Sungrazer Plus	KF 194, CD90160, giant
Vaquero	CD 90160, Mirage

Because common is a good seed producer, it is less expensive than other seeded bermudagrasses. Giant is used in some blends because of better seedling growth and early forage production than other seeded bermudagrasses. However, it will not persist for more than 2 or 3 years in the eastern half of Texas. As the giant bermudagrass thins, the other varieties or selections in the mixture fill in. Giant has persisted in drier climates in the western half of Texas under irrigation. Recommended seeding rates for bermudagrass are from 5 to 10 lb/acre. Both hulled and unhulled seed of common and giant are available. Hulled bermudagrass has the outer seed brackets removed and germinates quicker, especially at cooler temperatures, than unhulled seed. Hulled bermudagrass seed are shiny dark brown and very small (1/64 in. long). Unhulled bermudagrass seed is about 1/16 in. long with a dull straw color. Mixtures of hulled and unhulled

common bermudagrass are sold by some seed companies. A pound of hulled bermudagrass seed contains about 2 million seed and a pound of unhulled bermudagrass seed contains 1.5 million seed. Some bermudagrass seed are coated with a clay material that may contain some plant nutrients. The coating increases seed size which makes planting easier and doubles the weight of the seed which helps disperse the seed when using a broadcast seeder. Because the coating doubles the seed weight, a pound of coated seed contains only about half the seed that a pound of uncoated seed does.

Optimum temperatures for bermudagrass seed germination is when daily low temperatures reach 60°F which is about May 1 for the Overton area. Planting after mid-June is discouraged because of normally hot and dry weather conditions. Because bermudagrass seed is so small, it is best to broadcast the seed on a prepared seedbed and roll it with a packer to press the seed in to the soil surface. If the seed bed is not firm (boot heel imprint is deeper than ½ in.) also roll before broadcasting seed. Weeds, especially crabgrass, are a major problem in getting good stands of seeded bermudagrass. There are no preemergent herbicides that selectively control seeds without harming emerging bermudagrass seedlings. One option is to prepare a seedbed and roll it with a packer. Weeds will emerge with the first rain. Before the weeds exceed 2 to 3 in. tall, spray Gramoxone Max (1.5 pt/acre) or Roundup Ultra (1 pt/acre). After the weeds turn brown (1 day for Gramoxone Max, 5 to 7 days for Roundup Ultra), broadcast bermudagrass seed and roll to press the seed in the soil surface. Additional weeds will emerge with the next rain, but the initial big flush of weeds will be eliminated.

Forage production and nutritive value of seeded bermudagrasses are comparable to Coastal bermudagrass but they are not as good as Tifton 85 bermudagrass. Nor are the seeded bermudagrasses as drought tolerant as Tifton 85 bermudagrass.

Recommendation: To establish a seeded bermudagrass plant about May 1 in northeast Texas. Prepare a good firm seedbed and pack with a roller. After the first rain, kill any emerging weeds with a chemical desiccant. After the weeds turn brown, broadcast the bermudagrass seed at 5 to 10 lb/acre and pack again to press the seed in to the soil surface.