

# An Overview Of Cool-Season Forages In Ohio

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white clovers persist better under heavy, continuous grazing because they are prolific reseeder. Purchase seed of stated quality to be certain of obtaining pure seed of the white clover desired.

• Alsike clover is a short-lived perennial legume that is tolerant of wet, acidic soils. Alsike tolerates soils with a pH as low as 5.0, which is too acidic for red clover and alfalfa. Alsike also grows better than red clover on alkaline (high pH) soils. Alsike tolerates flooding better than other legumes, making it well suited for low-lying fields with poor drainage. Alsike can withstand spring flooding for several weeks. A cool and moist environment is ideal for alsike clover growth; it has poor heat and drought tolerance. It usually produces only one crop of hay. It must be allowed to reseed itself to maintain its presence in pastures, otherwise it will last only about two years.

• Kentucky bluegrass is a long-lived perennial grass especially well suited to pastures. It forms a dense, tough sod under favorable conditions, providing good footing for grazing animals. Kentucky bluegrass is one of the most forgiving grasses, able to tolerate and persist under a wide range of soil conditions and mismanagement; however, it responds to good management. Kentucky bluegrass grows best under cool and moist conditions, and

usually becomes semi-dormant during the summer. Planting good quality seed results in a more productive pasture than the naturally volunteering bluegrass.

• Orchardgrass is a versatile perennial bunch-type grass (no rhizomes) that establishes rapidly and is suitable for hay, silage, or pasture. Orchardgrass is probably the most productive cool-season grass grown in Ohio, especially under good fertility management. It has rapid regrowth, produces well under intensive cutting or grazing, and attains more summer growth than most of the other cool-season grasses.

Orchardgrass tolerates drought better than several other grasses. Orchardgrass grows best in deep, well-drained, loamy soils. Its flooding tolerance is fair in the summer but poor in the winter.

Orchardgrass is especially well suited for mixtures with tall legumes, such as alfalfa and red clover. The rapid decline in palatability and quality with maturity is a limitation with this grass. Timely harvest management is essential for obtaining good quality forage.

Improved varieties of orchardgrass, with high yield potential and improved resistance to leaf diseases, are available. When seeding orchardgrass-legume mixtures, select varieties that mature at about the same time. The later-maturing

varieties are best suited for growing with alfalfa, because they match the maturity development of alfalfa and are easier to manage for timely harvest to obtain good quality forage.

• Perennial ryegrass is a bunch grass suitable for hay, silage, or pasture. It is best adapted to northeast Ohio. Perennial ryegrass produces excellent quality and palatable forage, is a vigorous establisher, has a long growing season, and is high yielding under good fertility when moisture is not lacking. Because it is less winter hardy than other grasses, perennial ryegrass is best seeded in combination with other grasses and legumes. It has not persisted well in the southern half of Ohio because of its lack of heat and drought tolerance. Perennial ryegrass can be grown on occasionally wet soils. It is less competitive with legumes than orchardgrass, and is usually later to mature than orchardgrass. Like orchardgrass, perennial ryegrass can withstand frequent cutting or grazing. It is more difficult to cut with a sickle bar mower and is slower to dry than other grasses.

Other cool season grasses in Ohio include:

- reed canarygrass;
- smooth brome grass;
- tall fescue;
- timothy;
- prairie grass; and
- garrison grass.



## The Rohrer Sales Team

The Rohrer sales team thanks you for your business this season. We were blessed with an excellent forage planting season this year. We have ample supply of all our mixes and varieties of forage seed for last minute plantings. If you are done with your spring pasture seedings, please keep us in mind for this August and September for your fall needs.



The Rohrer Sales Team (from left): Ed Koncle, Earl Rohrer, Paul Cambell, Gary Bender

Ed Koncle is our farm seed dealer salesman. Please call Ed if you are interested in becoming a Rohrer dealer. Earl Rohrer and Gary Bender work in the Rohrer office on phone and counter sales of farm seeds. Paul Cambell is Rohrer's farm seed salesman covering southern Lancaster Co.

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