

# Grazing Bites

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My dear Mother always said that the older you get, the faster time goes, she was right. I really don't know what happened to the summer. August is prep month for the beginnings of fall activities starting with the seeding of permanent vegetation, early planting of annuals for grazing/haying and getting ready for any cover crop/annuals being planted for grazing on cropland after row crops are harvested. I listened this past Sunday to a former teacher who has been influential in my life. He mentioned thinking outside the box, which he certainly has done, and it got me thinking, utilizing annuals often requires thinking outside of the box.

Depending on where you are located in Indiana, moisture is often an issue. For some, it is the lack of sufficient moisture, and for others it excess. Neither is good. If we could add the two together and divide it up evenly, then most places would be in better shape.

Early August to mid-September is an excellent time to plant cool-season grasses to get enough good growth to guarantee they survive the coming winter months. One of the advantages of seeding at this time of the year is lower competition from weeds as compared to a spring seeding. If you happen to be in one of the drier areas then you still have time for weather conditions to improve and the seed in the fall generally waits on the rain. If you are in areas blessed with more rain, then plant when you have good soil conditions which is not too difficult this time of year. Soil should be friable, not saturated, to get good seed to soil contact without compacting the soil or the seeding slot.

Later plantings, generally after September 15<sup>th</sup>, can work some years but are little more unpredictable in results. If you are waiting for a row crop to be harvested prior to seeding, then time is not always on your side. It will depend on the harvest date, especially where crops were planted late this year. Tall fescues and Timothy probably handle being seeded the latest, but may require a nurse crop, such as wheat or oats to survive over winter.

I've said this before, but I'll say it again, shop and choose a high quality seed, named varieties and from reputable companies. Do the math and seed at pure live seed (PLS) rates. Take the amount of seed needed (4 lbs. per Acre PLS) and divide it by (percent purity x percent germination).  $4 \text{ lbs.} \div (.95 \times .80) = 5.26$  pounds of seed needed per acre. You can do the same calculation and compare prices by dividing the price of the seed per pound by the PLS percent and see what the true cost is of the seed. \$1.20 per pound seed at the previous PLS rate is actually about \$1.58 per pound ( $\$1.20 / (.95 \times .80)$ ). Compare that price to some of that "bargain" seed, always checking the seed tag and testing date. A bargain is not always a bargain. I actually like seed grown the previous year, not the same year; it normally has less dormant seed. It should be stored though in a cool, dry location.

I really love the late maturing orchardgrass varieties which do a pretty good job of delaying seed head development as compared to earlier "hay type" varieties such as Potomac. If you are adding to an existing and thinning alfalfa field, a late maturing orchardgrass works quite well for this purpose and is best seeded at about 6-8 pounds per acre with a no-till drill.

The improved varieties of tall fescues should also be considered. They are not like Kentucky 31, with its associated negative endophyte problems, but rather either very low endophyte or ideally endophyte-friendly. The novel "endophyte-friendly" tall fescue is just as vigorous and high yielding, if not higher, than old Kentucky 31, but does not have the problems caused by the alkaloids associated with the endophyte fungus in Kentucky 31. Tall fescue, either way, should not be managed as a monoculture. Legumes such as white and or red clover and a compatible orchardgrass (only with improved varieties of tall fescue) work well.

The forages you chose to plant should match the field conditions, including soils they will be grown in, plant hardiness zone, to what degree they will be managed, the livestock requirements that will be consuming it, and the

use: grazing, haying, stockpiling, etc. Some livestock are more sensitive to certain forages than others; brood mares and endophyte-infected tall fescue or alpacas and perennial ryegrass are a couple of examples. If you are not sure what to plant, consult your local forage expert (NRCS, Purdue Extension, etc.).

At this time of year, I start to think about which fields I might want to stockpile for late fall and winter grazing. Tall fescue, for better or worse, is the most suitable for long-term stockpiling because it maintains its quality the longest. Start with planning which paddocks will make good winter stockpile and have accessible water during the winter months. Paddocks that are being utilized right now should have livestock removed in a timely manner to leave adequate live plant growth behind. The longer the rest period you have in the fall, the more potential growth and stockpile. With opportunities of annuals to graze, and later corn stalks and/or corn stalks with winter annuals planted into them, you will get the chance to rest more pastures, for longer periods, and with increasing potential to graze even longer later on. It is usually better to clip fields that will be stockpiled if there are abundant weeds or seed heads present to make sure that as much green solar panel is working as possible to improve fall growth and quality.

There will be several people that will think that that fall regrowth might look better rolled up as a bale of hay, but really, is it going to go anywhere if you don't bale it? It is almost always more economically feasible to graze rather than to bale it. Yes, you need to have some hay on hand, but there is room to cut back, especially when baling it causes you to have to start feeding it earlier. There is plenty to do without adding more work.

August and early September are also a great time to plant annuals for fall and winter grazing. These are generally sown into crop fields after harvest. There is a wide array of annuals that can be utilized and the type is dictated somewhat by what will be grazing it, when it will be grazed, and also what you want left growing there afterwards. My favorite fall grazing mix is spring oats, a brassica such as turnips, and cereal rye. The oats and turnips provide some really good high yielding fall forage for grazing and the cereal rye sticks around to keep something green growing and providing some winter cover and spring residue. In dry areas, where cool season forages have gone dormant, with a little moisture, annuals such as turnips and winter peas can provide some extra diversity and forage for later. Now that is thinking outside the box. Keep on grazing!

## ***Reminders & Opportunities***

**Pasture Field Day – August 20<sup>th</sup>** – Rising Sun, IN – Contact the Dearborn County SWCD for more information and register by August 15<sup>th</sup> by calling 812-926-2406 Ext 3.

**Eastern Native Grass Symposium – August 29-31** – Tropicana at Evansville, IN. There is a great line up of speakers including Ray Archuleta, Ellen Jacquart, Steve Clubine, Chuck Stanley, Dr. Pat Keyser, Jef Hodges, Dr. Cris Hochwender, Dave Howell, John Shuey, Dr. Stephen Ball, Kevin Tungesvick and others. Speakers will be on Monday and Tuesday of the symposium with tours on Wednesday morning. Tours will include: grazing for wildlife in Warrick County; Patoka Fish & Wildlife Refuge grass/pollinator management in Gibson County; and Angel Mounds, pollinators, warm season grasses, and green roofs in Vanderburgh County. Click here to register: [www.easternnativegrassymposium.eventbrite.com](http://www.easternnativegrassymposium.eventbrite.com). For the complete agenda go to [Eastern Native Grass Symposium](#) on Facebook or contact of the following Southwest Soil and Water Conservation Districts (All at Ext 3): Pike County, 812-354-6120; Gibson County, 812-385-5033; Warrick County, 812-897-2840; Vanderburgh County, 812-423-4426, and Posey County at 812-838-4191.

**Purdue Forage Management Workshop – September 7<sup>th</sup> – Purdue Agronomy Farm.** For more information go to: <https://ag.purdue.edu/agry/dtc/Pages/forage.aspx>

**Southern Indiana Purdue Ag Center (SIPAC) Ag Day – September 10<sup>th</sup> – at SIPAC.** Starts at 2 pm and is over by 8 pm. Meal provided and topics include cattle handling facilities and raising tilapia. RSVP by September 6<sup>th</sup> by calling 812-482-1782. For more information contact Purdue Extension Dubois County at (812) 482-1782 or Jason Tower at [towerj@purdue.edu](mailto:towerj@purdue.edu) or (812) 678-4427.

More pasture information and past issues of Grazing Bites are available at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/in/technical/landuse/pasture/>