

Winter Annual Species Fact Sheet



Triticale

Triticale is a versatile winter annual used for grazing, hay, silage, or as a cover crop. It is a hybrid between wheat and rye that is winter hardy and a very productive winter annual species with large leaves and heavy tillering. It matures slower than other species giving it a wider grazing window. Along with other small grains, it is a good choice for overseeding bermuda in the winter. Due to its growth period, it has less of an impact on the bermuda grass green-up in the late spring.

Oats

Oats can be either a spring or a winter variety. Spring varieties can be planted either in the fall or the spring. They do not handle the frost well. Be prepared to graze them before heavy frost and other winter weather damages them. Winter oats are a better choice for true winter grazing as they can withstand the harsher weather conditions.

Oats are quick growing, especially when fertilized, and are good for an initial grazing pass while waiting for other species to reach grazing height.



Cereal Rye

Not to be confused with ryegrass, this small grain forage is a great option for winter grazing. Cereal rye is widely available and the most cold-tolerant of the small grains. It is easy to establish and is well adapted to a wide range of growing conditions. It matures quicker than other cereal grains so it has a smaller grazing window for optimal quality.



Ryegrass

Ryegrass is ideal for grazing late fall through late spring. Because of this, ryegrass works really well in combination with other cereal grains. The cereals provide forage in the fall through midwinter before the ryegrass is grazed.

Notes:

Annual ryegrass should not be seeded into fields that may be seeded to wheat in the future, as there are no effective herbicides to control volunteer annual ryegrass plants in wheat.

Ryegrass also continues to grow when bermudagrass is breaking dormancy. It is a less desirable choice for overseeding bermuda pastures.



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Barley

Barley is another small grain that can be used for winter grazing. While there aren't many forage varieties, it can still be utilized in a pasture setting. However, it will have lower biomass compared to other species. Barley is less winter hardy than wheat or rye. This crop has lower lignin content and higher digestibility than other small grains.

Mixed Stand

By mixing together different species, you can spread out your grazing season by taking advantage of the different growing periods. The species included and the percentages of the species can be customized to your grazing needs. You can also find pre-mixed bags that have defined percentages. Using rotational grazing strategies is important for efficient utilization in order to avoid overgrazing any one species in the mix.



Broadcast vs Drilling

The planting method can impact the success of establishment.

While both methods can produce excellent stands, it is important to consider site preparation. The broadcast method will need a higher seeding rate in order to produce a thick enough stand. Cultipacking will help ensure good seed to soil contact for the best chance at germination. Drilling requires a seed drill that is appropriately calibrated for the seed that is to be planted. Both methods will do better if planted into a pasture with less thatch and cover.



Broadcast

Drilling

Peak Production

Planting



Spring Oats



Cereal Rye/
Winter Oats



Triticale/
Barley



Ryegrass/
Spring Oats



Early Fall

Late Fall

Early Winter

Late Winter

Early Spring

Late Spring