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Reed Canarygrass (*Phalaris arundinacea*)

Description

Reed canarygrass is a large, perennial, coarse grass that reaches 2 to 9 feet in height. This vigorous grass is one of the first to sprout in spring, and forms a thick rhizome system that dominates the subsurface soil. This habit makes this species invasive in wetland environments, which is noted by the Minnesota DNR, but it continues to be planted as forage and pasture grass. It can be cut frequently and is hardy and persistent due to its rhizomatous growth. It can have comparative forage quality to other cool-season grasses if cut at the appropriate maturity. It is well suited for pasture mixes with legumes such as alfalfa, birdsfoot trefoil and clovers. Select improved, low-alkaloid varieties of reed canarygrass for optimum livestock performance.

Overview

- Uses:** Forage—Hay—Non-agricultural use
- Strengths:** Adapted to a wide range of soils types
Extremely persistent and productive
Will survive in standing water
- Weaknesses:** Feed quality is poor if cut after plant heads out
May become invasive
Slow to establish
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Plant Information

- Winterhardiness:** Excellent
- Drought-Tolerance:** Excellent
- Wet soil tolerance:** Excellent
- Average Nitrogen Fixation:** NA
- Forage Yield Range:** 6.25 to 7.0 Tons / Acre DM
- Relative Forage Quality:** 146 to 149 (index value)
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Seed and Seeding Info

Seeds per lb:	533,000
Seeding Rate Alone:	8 to 10 lb / A
Seeding Rate in Mixtures:	1 to 4 lb / A
Range of Seeding Dates:	Spring or Fall
Methods of seeding:	Drill or Broadcast
Best seeding depth:	1/4 - 1/2 in
Best Soil types:	Most except coarse sands
pH tolerances:	4.9 – 8.2

Cultural and Harvest Information

As a grazing crop?

Agronomists have long been interested in reed canary grass as a forage crop and have developed cultivars palatable to animals (low alkaloid varieties). This grass has great tolerance to grazing and regrows rapidly following grazing pressure. The palatability of reed canarygrass declines as the plant matures. Maintain the height below a foot tall in May and June to sustain palatability of the grass alone or in mixture. Rotational grazing is a good option to maintain feed values of canarygrass. Do not graze lower than 3 to 4 inches and allow a rest period following intensive grazing.

As a haying crop?

Reed Canary grass can be used as a hay crop but good management is essential. It should be cut when it is short in order to preserve its palatability and feed value. You should get at least 3 to 4 cuttings a year and the first cutting should be taken as soon as possible after the head appears. Under good management, Reed Canary will produce 30 percent more hay than all other grasses.

Albert Lea Seed House Product Information Guide

The information presented here is based on the best agronomic information we could cull from University Publications and other sources (usually identified). The cultural and agronomic information is relevant only to farming in the upper mid-west. This information is not infallible and is not a substitute for experience and/or education. We **do not guarantee** farming results based on this information.