



ALBERT LEA SEED

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Tall Fescue (*Festuca arundinacea*)

Description

Tall fescue (*Festuca arundinacea*) is a deep rooted, cool-season perennial grass. The plant produces vigorous growth in the spring and fall and its extensive root system helps it to withstand drought. Tall fescue produces short rhizomes but has a bunch-type growth habit - it spreads primarily by erect tillers. Individual tillers, or stems, terminate in an inflorescence that can reach 3 to 4 feet in height. The grass flowers in the spring and seed matures in early summer. It is more productive in midsummer than other commonly utilized cool-season grasses. It is well suited for mixture with legumes for pasture or hay production in addition to warm-season grasses for extended pasturage throughout the summer.

Overview

Uses: Forage--Pasture--Hay

Strengths: Good forage yield
Long grazing season
Excellent persistence
Tolerance of low-input management
More tolerant of shade than other cool season grasses

Weaknesses: Unimproved varieties can contain endophytes in the seed
Unimproved varieties can have poor grazing quality

Plant Information

Winterhardiness: Moderate
Drought-Tolerance: Excellent
Wet soil tolerance: Poor
Average Nitrogen Fixation: NA
Forage Yield Range: 5.5 to 7.5 Tons / Acre DM
Relative Forage Quality: 128 – 141 (index value)

Seed and Seeding Info

Seeds per lb:	227,000
Seeding Rate Alone:	20 to 25 lb / A
Seeding Rate in Mixtures:	4 to 12 lb / A
Range of Seeding Dates:	Spring or Early Fall
Methods of seeding:	Broadcast or Drill
Best seeding depth:	¼ to ½ in
Best Soil types:	Medium to fine
pH tolerances:	5.5 to 8.5

Cultural and Harvest Information

As a grazing crop?

New seedlings of tall fescue should not be grazed until the grass is fully established; cut at least 2 crops of hay prior to grazing. Leave 4-6 inches of stubble after each mowing to maintain plant vigor, to promote rapid re-growth. Select improved "soft leaf" varieties that are more palatable for grazing. Tall fescue should be mixed with alfalfa or clover to maintain palatability and feeding value and careful attention must be paid to ensure the legumes are not smothered by the grass. Keep soil pH above 6 and apply minerals (K, Ca) as needed. Begin grazing early on established stands and graze to a short height. Begin spring grazing when plants are 10-12 inches high. Allow 3-5 weeks re-growth between each grazing. Nitrogen is usually required on a yearly basis. Accumulated fescue growth in monoculture can be effectively used for stockpiling in the winter; it often has higher forage quality after a frost in the fall than other cool-season grasses.

As a haying crop?

Tall fescue is one of the best choices for seeding with alfalfa. It establishes and matures at the same rate as alfalfa. Tall Fescue can provide 2 to 3 cuttings of hay per year. Tall fescue routinely is conserved as hay or silage for late fall and winter feed. As with all forage species, the quality of tall fescue is influenced greatly by maturity stage at harvest. For dairy or sheep, cut forage grasses in the early boot stage. For growing beef cows, you can delay harvest until heading stage. Yields are higher than at boot stage, and forage is of acceptable quality for non-lactating livestock.

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.