

Pasture Species Sowing Guide for the Top End

A. G. Cameron, Principal Pastures and Extension Agronomist and B. Lemcke, Principal Livestock Management Officer, Darwin

This Agnote lists the currently available species of grasses and legumes that can be sown as improved pastures for grazing or for the production of fodder in the monsoonal rainfall zone of the Northern Territory. This zone is defined as having a distinct wet season with over 600 mm annual rainfall.

Detailed information on most of the listed plants is available in Agnotes, which can be obtained from our website (see below) or from the Technical Publications Section, Berrimah Farm, GPO Box 3000, Darwin, NT 0801, or by calling (08) 8999 2313. For further information and helpful discussion, contact departmental officers at Berrimah Farm or the Katherine Research Station.

When purchasing seed, make sure that it has been tested for germination and purity. Ask to see a copy of the Seed Analysis Certificate. Do not buy pasture seeds that contain weed seeds, especially of new weeds or those on the NT Declared Weeds list. If in doubt, contact the Seed Laboratory at Berrimah Farm. Where possible, buy locally-produced seed. To maintain viability, store seeds in a cool dry room prior to sowing. The availability and prices of seeds can fluctuate markedly from year to year, depending on the previous year's production and the choice of seed producers to grow particular cultivars for seed. Seeds of new cultivars are generally not freely available for a number of years after they are released.

Where possible, a mixture of grass and legume species should be sown or planted. For easy management, it is better to sow a number of legumes with a single grass. When sowing a mixture of legumes with a grass, reduce the sowing rate of each component. If in doubt of what pasture mix to sow, consult a departmental Advisory Officer.



Figure 1. Pasture grass at Beatrice Hill

Table 1. Pasture grasses

Species	Common name	Cultivar	Rainfall (mm)	Soils
<i>Bothriochloa pertusa</i>	Indian bluegrass	Bowen	Over 600	Clays, well drained
<i>Cenchrus ciliaris</i>	Buffel grass	American	600 to 1300	Sandy loam
<i>Cenchrus ciliaris</i>	Buffel grass	Gayndah	600 to 1300	Sandy loam
<i>Cenchrus setiger</i>	Birdwood grass		600 to 750	Sandy loam
<i>Chloris gayana</i>	Rhodes grass	Fine-cut	Irrigated only	Upland
<i>Digitaria eriantha</i>	Pangola grass		Over 1100	Wet to upland
<i>Digitaria milanjana</i>	Finger grass	Jarra	Over 1100	Wet to upland
<i>Digitaria milanjana</i>	Finger grass	Strickland	Over 1100	Wet to upland
<i>Digitaria swynnertonii</i>	Finger grass	Arnhem	Over 1100	Wet to upland
<i>Echinochloa polystachya</i>	Aleman grass	Amity	Over 1100	Flooded
<i>Hymenachne acutigluma</i>	Hymenachne	Native	Over 1000	Flooded
<i>Panicum maximum</i>	Guinea grass	Common	Over 1000	Deep, well drained
<i>Panicum maximum</i>	Guinea grass	Hamil	Over 1100	Deep, well drained
<i>Setaria sphacelata</i>	Setaria	Kazungula	Over 1100	Wet to upland
<i>Sorghum</i> sp	Perennial sorghum	Silk	900 to 1300	Deep, well drained
<i>Urochloa decumbens</i>	Signal grass	Basilisk	Over 1000	Upland
<i>Urochloa humidicola</i>	Koronivia grass	Tully	Over 1000	Wet to upland
<i>Urochloa mosambicensis</i>	Sabi grass	Nixon	600 to 1200	Sandy loam
<i>Urochloa mutica</i>	Para grass		Over 1000	Flooded

Table 2. Pasture legumes

Species	Common name	Cultivar	Rainfall (mm)	Soils
<i>Aeschynomene americana</i>	American joint-vetch	Glenn	Over 1100	Wet to upland
<i>Aeschynomene americana</i>	American joint-vetch	Lee	Over 1100	Wet to upland
<i>Centrosema pascuorum</i>	Centurion, Centro	Bunday	Over 1100	Wet and upland
<i>Centrosema pascuorum</i>	Centurion, Centro	Cavalcade	700 to 1500	Wet and upland
<i>Chamaecrista rotundifolia</i>	Round leaf cassia	Wynn	Over 900	Sandy surfaced
<i>Clitoria ternatea</i>	Blue pea	Milgarra	900 to 1300	Upland
<i>Stylosanthes hamata</i>	Caribbean stylo	Amiga	Over 600	Upland
<i>Stylosanthes hamata</i>	Caribbean stylo	Verano	Over 600	Upland
<i>Stylosanthes scabra</i>	Shrubby stylo	Seca	Over 600	Upland, well drained
<i>Stylosanthes scabra</i>	Shrubby stylo	Siran	Over 600	Upland, well drained

Table 3. Pasture mixes

Grass	Suitable legumes
Birdwood grass	Amiga, Seca, Siran, Verano
Buffel grass	Amiga, Cavalcade, Milgarra, Seca, Siran, Verano
Finger grass	Amiga, Bunday, Cavalcade, Glenn, Verano
Perennial sorghum	Amiga, Bunday, Cavalcade, Milgarra, Seca, Siran, Verano
Guinea grass	Amiga, Bunday, Cavalcade, Glenn, Lee, Verano
Indian bluegrass	Amiga, Verano, Wynn
Koronivia grass	Amiga, Bunday, Glenn, Lee, Verano
Pangola grass	Amiga, Bunday, Cavalcade, Glenn, Verano
Para grass	Bunday, Glenn, Lee
Sabi grass	Amiga, Cavalcade, Milgarra, Seca, Siran, Verano, Wynn
Setaria	Bunday, Cavalcade, Glenn, Lee, Wynn
Signal grass	Amiga, Bunday, Cavalcade, Glenn, Lee, Verano

Table 4. Forage grasses

Species	Common name	Cultivar	Rainfall (mm)	Soils
<i>Pennisetum americanum</i>	pearl millet	Ingrid Pearl	900 to 1300	Deep, well-drained
<i>Pennisetum americanum</i>	pearl millet	Katherine Pearl	900 to 1300	Deep, well -rained
<i>Sorghum</i> sp.	forage sorghum	Jumbo	900 to 1300	Deep, well-drained
<i>Sorghum</i> sp.	forage sorghum	Magic	900 to 1300	Deep, well-drained
<i>Sorghum</i> sp.	forage sorghum	Sugargraze	900 to 1300	Deep, well-drained
<i>Sorghum</i> sp.	forage sorghum	Silk	900 to 1300	Deep, well-drained

Table 5. Forage legumes

Species	Common name	Cultivar	Rainfall (mm)	Soils
<i>Lablab purpureus</i>	Lablab bean	Highworth	900 to 1300	Deep, well-drained
<i>Lablab purpureus</i>	Lablab bean	Rongai	900 to 1300	Deep, well-drained
<i>Vigna unguiculata</i>	Cowpea	Arafura	900 to 1300	Deep, well-drained
<i>Vigna unguiculata</i>	Cowpea	Meringa	900 to 1300	Deep, well-drained
<i>Vigna unguiculata</i>	Cowpea	Palmyra	900 to 1300	Deep, well-drained

There are other species and cultivars available, including some newly released, which have not been included above because they have not been fully tested as pasture plants under commercial conditions in the Top End.

The species and cultivars which appear to have some potential, are listed below.

Table 6. Other species/cultivars

Grass species	Common name
<i>Dicanthium aristatum</i> cv Floren	Angleton grass
<i>Panicum</i> sp cv Nucal	
<i>Paspalum notatum</i> cv Pensacola	Bahia grass
<i>Pennisetum glaucum</i> cv Siromill	Pearl millet
<i>Sorghum</i> sp cv Jaffa	Perennial sorghum
<i>Urochloa brizantha</i> cv Mekong	
<i>Urochloa mosambicensis</i> cv Saraji	Sabi grass

Legume species	Common name
<i>Alysicarpus vaginalis</i>	Buffalo clover
<i>Centrosema brasilianum</i> cv Ooloo	Brasilianum, centro
<i>Desmanthus</i> sp cv Progardes	Desmanthus
<i>Leucaena leucocephala</i> cv Cunningham	Leucaena
<i>Leucaena leucocephala</i> cv Peru	Leucaena
<i>Leucaena leucocephala</i> cv Taramba	Leucaena
<i>Stylosanthes guianensis</i> cv V8	Stylo

WARNING

Pasture plants have the potential to become weeds in certain situations. To prevent that, ensure that pasture seeds and/or vegetative materials are not inadvertently transferred to adjacent properties or road sides.

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ISSN 0157-8243

Serial No. 544

Agdex No. 130/32

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