

E-Mail: elstel1@brightok.net
Check out our webpage at: <http://crabgrass.hypermart.net>

FACT SHEET – 2001

Introduction: Red River variety and Native Crabgrass are high quality, very palatable, warm season grasses. Crabgrass is a reseeding annual under the proper cultural and grazing practices. It is used as a pure stand, in numerous winter-summer double cropping syndromes and in mixtures. Mixtures may be grass mixtures of either annual or perennial grasses with or without legumes. In this case we will focus on the legumes.

Reasons for a Crabgrass & Legume mixture. The usual reasons for using legumes in grass mixtures are to add length of green growing season, add forage quality, and to provide some nitrogen source from the legume.

The cool season legumes in double crop or mixtures with Red River or other Crabgrass can add upwards to 6 to 8 weeks of early spring grazing. The warm season legumes do not add much or any green season, but act primarily as a summer mixture as does the late spring season of cool season legumes. Warm season legumes such as alfalfa will grow later in the fall than crabgrass.

Most leafy legumes are premium quality and may add some quality over crabgrass. But, remember leafy crabgrass is 75% or more digestible and often equal or more palatable than legumes. They make very good companions.

A very good stand of legumes can provide 50 to over 100 pounds of actual nitrogen per acre. Roughly 80%, more or less, of the nitrogen is in the above ground growth. The best benefit from that growth, the grazing must be done rationally and by keeping the livestock on the paddocks to recycle the nitrogen in the manure and urine. Hay effectively removes most of the nitrogen from the field, but the hay can be superb at near 20% crude protein. Recent averaged information by Chamblee and Mueller of North Carolina State University showed a bermudagrass-native crabgrass mix without nitrogen to yield _____ pounds per acre and with 120 pounds per acre nitrogen to yield _____ pounds per acre. When cool season annual legumes were added, without nitrogen, the yield was _____ pounds per acre and when the bermudagrass, crabgrass and legumes mixture was fertilized with 120 pounds per acre nitrogen the yield was _____ pounds per acre. Usually a complimentary grass or legume in a forage mixture adds production.

Planting Crabgrass & Legume mixtures There are many acceptable options to establishing Red River or native crabgrass stands.

A cool season grass and legume mix can be overseeded with crabgrass, or the crabgrass may be volunteer in that case. If no cool season grass is involved the legume can be fall seeded and crabgrass overseeded into that during spring. If the cool season legume and crabgrass are both spring planted, that can be done as a seed mixture during spring.

When summer legumes and crabgrass are grown together, they can be seeded as a mixture. Or, either one can be added to the other as in interseeding into an existing stand. That is more usual in existing alfalfa stands. Crabgrass and warm season legume mixtures may also include other summer grasses such as Piper sudangrass, German millet, pearl millet, browntop millet, or bermudagrass, etc.

Fertilization of Grass & Legume Mixtures Anytime a legume is used, phosphorus, potassium and lime should be supplied for the legume according to soil test results. That amount will be adequate or surplus for grasses. Research and experience show that about 20 to 50 pounds actual nitrogen can be used on these mixtures in the drier regions of about 35 inches rainfall or less without serious harm to the legume.

Listing of Successful Mixtures

- Cool season annual grasses, legumes and crabgrass. This legume could be crimson clover, arrowleaf clover, red clover, other clovers or hairy vetch.
- Any cool season legume and crabgrass. The combination could be any clover, hairy vetch and possibly Austrian winter pea and crabgrass.
- Alfalfa and crabgrass
- Annual lespedeza and crabgrass
- Southern cowpea and crabgrass
- Soybean (grain or hay type) and crabgrass
- Mungbean and crabgrass

Other Information This subject is rather extensive and all cannot be covered herein. Feel free to contact us for more input.

Please review our web page at: <http://crabgrass.hypermart.net>

We also suggest you visit the noble foundation web page for more crabgrass information in general and to read much other information on the web. The address is: www.noble.org.

We also have other Elstel Farm & Seed Fact sheets available upon request:

- 1996 Red river Crabgrass, Planting & Production Management
- 1997 Details of Red River Crabgrass, Planting, Management & Reminders
- 1998 Doublecropping Crabgrass & Winter Pasture and Grass Crops
- 1999 Managing Volunteer Stands of Crabgrass
- 2000 Using Nurse Crops and Companion Forages to Establish Crabgrass Stands.