

## **Don't Plant Summer Annuals Too Early**

Once corn, beans, and other crops are all planted, it's natural to be anxious to plant your summer annual forage grasses. But don't rush. Too early is bad for these crops.

Summer annual forage crops - like sudangrass, millets, cane, TEFF, and sorghum-sudan hybrids - are hot weather crops. And when I say hot weather, that means not only that they grow best in hot weather, it also means they can be injured or even permanently stunted by cool weather. So, even though you might finish other planting early and it seems summer is already here, don't plant summer annuals too early.

Always wait to plant summer annual forage grasses - any summer annual forage grass - until soil temperature will remain permanently above 60 degrees. And soil should be at least 65 to 70 degrees for the millets and TEFF. Late May at the earliest, early June in many cases.

Not only that, air temperature also must remain warm, even at night. If either soil or air temperature gets too cold some summer annual grasses can be stunted permanently, no matter how nice the growing conditions are later on.

True sudangrass might tolerate cool temperatures best of all the summer grasses. I don't know the exact limits, but if soil stays above 55 degrees and air temperature gets no lower than 40, I think sudangrass eventually will recover from the cold stress. On the other hand, millets and some forage sorghums may never snap out of the stress caused by a 45, maybe even a 50 degree night.

So don't rush to plant summer annual grasses. Even if they don't get stunted, the few days you gain for earlier grazing is pretty small compared to the risk of losing much of their growth potential.

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