

Selecting Summer Annual Forage Grasses

Are you planning to plant a summer annual grass, maybe to boost cattle numbers or to build hay supply? Which one will you plant? It can be confusing because there are six different types of major summer annual forage grasses — sudangrass, sorghum-sudan hybrids, forage sorghum (which we often call cane or sorgo), foxtail millet, pearl millet, and TEFF. Each one has its own strengths and weaknesses. So base your choice primarily on how you plan to use it.

Do you want pasture? Then use sudangrass or pearl millet. Both are leafy, they regrow rapidly, and they contain less danger from prussic acid poisoning than other annual grasses. **What if you want hay or green chop?** Then select sorghum-sudan hybrids or pearl millet because they yield well and they have good feed value when cut two or three times.

On sandy soils, though, foxtail millet may be a better choice for **summer hay**. It dries fast, doesn't regrow after cutting, and handles dry soils well. **Cane hay** is grown in many areas and produces high tonnage, but it's lower in feed value and dries more slowly after cutting than the hybrids or millets. Or you could choose TEFF for a really soft, leafy, high quality **horse hay**. **Maybe you plan to chop silage.** Then choose the forage sorghums, especially hybrids with high grain production. They can't be beat for tonnage or for feed value.

See, it's not so confusing after all, is it? Simply select the one that is best adapted to the way you plan to use it. And, of course, pray for rain since even these grasses won't grow without some moisture.

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