

## GRASSES TO PLANT IN IRRIGATED PASTURES

High pasture rents and marginal returns from irrigated corn are causing many folks to consider irrigated pasture to solve both problems. Are you one of them?

Irrigated pastures can produce very high yields for high quality grazing. But profits from these pastures don't just happen. Good planning and high management is needed.

Part of your success depends on planting the best adapted grasses. Plant at least three grasses in a mixture rather than a single species in irrigated pastures. No single plant is best adapted to all situations, so mixtures help maximize your pasture potential.

Many grasses can be used, but one of the best is orchardgrass. It regrows fast after proper grazing and grows better in summer than most cool-season grasses. However, it does thin out over time. Smooth brome works well with orchardgrass. It's long lived and can spread into areas as orchardgrass plants die. But, it's summer growth is poor.

Another excellent choice is meadow brome. It is similar to orchardgrass but is more winterhardy and starts spring growth earlier. I also like to use creeping foxtail if there are any wet or poorly drained areas in the field because it grows best in these sites.

Tall fescue and festulolium are becoming more popular for irrigated pastures due to their durability and good summer growth.

Other grasses, like intermediate wheatgrass, perennial ryegrass, and reed canarygrass, also are suitable for irrigated pasture in special situations. Even big bluestem, switchgrass, and indiagrass work well when the water supply is limited. See your local extension office for more information.

Irrigated pastures can be highly productive and profitable. Start by planting the best grasses available.

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