

## **Bahiagrass: A Quick Reference<sup>1</sup>**

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In Florida, bahiagrass is the most planted warm-season perennial. Two-thirds of improved pastures are planted with bahiagrass because of its excellent adaptation, ease of management, persistence under low fertilization and close grazing, as well as its relatively simple planting.

### **Origin**

Native to South America, to equivalent latitude to that of northern Florida

### **Use**

Most of the acreage is used for grazing, with some hay and sod production, and production of seed harvested from pastures. Prospective growers need to be aware of the limitations in quality and quantity compared with other forage options.

### **Adaptation**

pH: 5.5 to 6.5. High pH (approximately > 6.5) will start negatively affecting production.

Soil: Low to high fertility; sand to clay, dry to wet  
 Rainfall: > 35 inches

Climate: Subtropical and humid regions; coastal plains

### **Management Practices**

Planting date: March (if irrigated) or during summer (June-August; rainy season)

Planting rate: 15 lb/acre or 25-30 lb/acre (low rates will have more initial competition with weeds).

Planting depth: 1/4 – 1/2 inch maximum. A common mistake is to plant it too deep.

### **Fertilization**

Planting: As soon as plants have emerged, apply 30 lb Nitrogen (N)/acre, all phosphorus ( $P_2O_5$ ) and 50% of potassium ( $K_2O$ ) recommended in soil test. 30-40 days later, apply rest of the potassium plus 70 lb N/acre.

### **Grazing:**

Low input system: 50 lb N/acre/yr only;  $P_2O_5$  as per recommendation based on soil and tissue tests; no phosphorus ( $P_2O_5$ ), and no potassium ( $K_2O$ ).

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Medium input system: 100 lb N/acre/year;  $P_2O_5$  as per recommendation based on soil and tissue tests; or (tissue P is less than 0.15%), and 50 lb  $K_2O$ /acre/year.

High input system: 160 lb N/acre/year (80 lb N/acre in spring + 80 lb N/acre in fall),  $P_2O_5$ , and  $K_2O$  as per soil and tissue test recommendation.

Hay: 80 lb N/acre/cut +  $P_2O_5$ , and  $K_2O$  as per soil test recommendation. Do not apply any fertilizer after mid-August.

Seed production: In hay fields, same recommendation as above. If grazing, 60-80 lb N/acre in Feb or Mar, when seed heads appear remove cattle and apply 60-80 lb N/acre.

### **Weed Control**

Seedlings are susceptible to phenoxy-type herbicides (2,4-D or Banvel); spray only when plants are 8 inches tall.

Pensacola-type (Pensacola, Tifton 9, UF-Riata, and TifQuick) bahiagrass will be severely injured by metsulfuron herbicide (examples are MSM 60, Cimarron Xtra, and others).

### **Pests and control**

Mole crickets. Control with nematode biological control applications, and also biologically with the *Larra* wasp that is attracted to the shrubby buttonweed (*Spermacoe verticillata*).

### **Additional Information**

Please visit the Forages of Florida website for additional information on Bahiagrass or any other pasture or forage-related topic. You can access it by typing Forages of Florida in Google, or click the link below.

Bahiagrass. Forages of Florida website  
<http://agronomy.ifas.ufl.edu/ForagesofFlorida/detail.php?sp=Bahiagrass&type=G>

Table 1.

<b>Bahiagrass</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Yield (lb/acre/year)</b>	<b>Quality*</b>	<b>Cold Tolerance</b>	<b>Seasonality</b>
<i>Common (not recommended)</i>	Short, broad leaves	Very Low	Very Low	Sensitive	
<i>Pensacola</i>	Long, narrow leaves	3500-10000	Low	FL - panhandle	Mar-Oct
<i>Tifton 9</i>	Longer leaves than Pensacola	30% more than Pensacola	Low	Some	1 more week of growth than Pensacola
<i>TifQuik</i>	Similar to Tifton 9	Slight yield increase over Tifton 9 in first year	Low	Some	Developed for rapid germination and quick establishment
<i>UF Riata</i>	Similar to Tifton 9	Higher seasonal tonnage than Argentine, Pensacola, and Tifton 9	Low	Good	Developed for fall and early spring forage production
<i>Argentine</i>	Wider leaves Less seed heads		Low	Low	No growth in early spring
<b>Bahiagrass</b>	<b>Purity</b>	<b>Light Seed**</b>	<b>Germination</b>	<b>Dormant Seed ***</b>	<b>Seed Yield</b>
<i>Pensacola</i>	95-98	3-5	50-60	25-30	50-120
<i>Tifton 9 †</i>	95-98	3-5	60-70	15-25	
<i>Argentine</i>	80 ‡	20	85-90	10-15	150-200
<i>UF Riata</i>	98	2	85-90	<10	(variety protected, cannot be grown for seed)
<p>* Quality is measured as crude protein (CP) and digestibility. Low is CP= 8-9% and digestibility= 45-60%.</p> <p>** Light seed refers to the inert (dead) material in samples. The inert material is the part of the seed called "glume" or the shell that encases the cariopsis (true seed in grasses).</p> <p>*** Refers to seed other than hard seed that will neither germinate nor decay during the prescribed test period and condition.</p> <p>† Selection out of Pensacola for higher germination and less dormant seed.</p> <p>‡ Less than Pensacola due to Ergot.</p>					