

Limpograss: A Quick Reference¹

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In Florida, limpograss (*Hemarthria altissima*) is one of the warm-season perennial grasses that has been increasingly adopted by ranchers during the past 15 years because of its superior digestibility, adaptation to seasonally flooded soils, and tolerance of light frost. It is grown throughout the state; however, it is extensively used in South and Central Florida. Limpograss may yield 8 to 10 tons of hay per acre under good fertility and soil moisture. Recommended cultivars are Floralta (latest release), and Bigalta which adapts better to sands higher in organic matter. Older cultivars, Redalta, and Greenalta, are not recommended because of lower forage quality.

Origin

Native to South Africa.

Use

Grazing, haying, and stockpiling (standing hay crop). It has superior digestibility at longer regrowth periods compared to other warm-season grasses (may be as high as 70%), but, in mature stockpiles, this can drop to as low as 40%. Protein is adequate in spring and fall, but in summer it may drop below 7%. Stockpiled material (12 to 16 weeks old may only have 3 to 4%

protein and cattle needs to be supplemented with protein or non-protein nitrogen source).

Description

Tall prostrate or decumbent growth (sod type) that can reach over 3 feet tall.

Adaptation

pH: Adapts to acid soils. Nevertheless, if soil is lower in pH it should be limed to the target pH, 5.5.

Soil: Fertile or fertilized sand to clay. Better adapted to flatwoods than well drained sands. Adapts to seasonally flooded sites.

Rainfall: High moisture and rain.

Climate: Subtropical to tropical wet. Tolerates light frost and begins growth soon after occurrence of freezing temperatures. No winter kill with minimum temperatures of 14 degrees F in Gainesville. However, shows some winter kill when temperatures are as low as 8 degrees F.

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All chemicals should be used in accordance with directions on the manufacturer's label.

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Management Practices

Planting date: April-May (if irrigated); best during rainy season (June-August).

Planting rate: 1000 to 1500 lb/acre of stem tops or stolons (requires vegetative establishment as it produces very few viable seed).

Planting depth: 2-3 inches.

Stubble height: No less than 12 inches when rotationally grazing (stocking). When continuously stocking, no less than 16 inches of stubble height should be left to ensure adequate stand persistence regardless of where in the state it is planted. Plant material that reaches 20 to 24 inches tends to lay flat where cattle will likely trample on it, if not used, it will build up an undesired thatch.

Fertilization

Planting: Whenever root growth has initiated (one to two weeks after planting), apply 30 lb N/acre, all phosphorus (P_2O_5) and 50% of potassium (K_2O) recommended in soil test. Thirty to 50 days later apply rest of the potassium, plus 70 lb N/acre.

Grazing: For grazed, established stands, apply 60 lb N/A and all of the P_2O_5 and K_2O in late winter or early spring. Apply an additional 60 lb N in late summer or early fall. For a minimum fertilization alternative, ignore the P and K recommendation and apply only 60 lb N per year.

Hay: 80 lb N/acre/cut + all phosphorus (P_2O_5), and all potassium (K_2O) in late winter or early spring. After each cutting, apply 80 lb N plus 40 lb of K_2O /acre. Apply fertilizer up to 6 weeks prior to end of season. Include 20 lb of P_2O_5 /acre in the supplemental fertilizer if the soil tested low or medium in P.

Stockpiling: Remove cattle in mid August from area to be stockpiled; follow by fertilization (80 lb N plus 40 lb of K_2O /acre).

Broad-leaf Weed Control

(Check with County Agent or Extension Weed Specialist for updates and restrictions, and always follow label directions).

Do not use 2,4-D (several brands) or 2,4-D containing herbicides such as Weedmaster (2,4-D + dicamba) because limpoggrass may be injured or killed.

Use dicamba herbicide (brand examples are Banvel, Clarity or Vanquish). Limpoggrass has shown more tolerance to dicamba than 2,4-D.

Pests and control

(Check with County agent or extension weed specialist for updates on rates and restrictions, and always follow label directions).

- Spittlebugs are likely to be present if a thatch has built up in the pastures. Graze or cut accumulated summer growth to avoid this situation.
- Chinchbugs are likely to be present in very dry years.
- Isolated cases of Armyworm damage have been reported.

Additional Information

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