

# STEPS TO A SUCCESSFUL PASTURE

## When can I seed?

Grasses can be planted almost year round as long as there is adequate moisture to keep the surface relatively moist for 45-60 days. Spring is the traditional seeding time. Dormant seeding (late fall or early winter) can also be successful. Dormant seeding gives the plants a quick start when soil temperatures rise.

## Should I fertilize?

You should begin with a fertile seedbed. Check with County Extension Agent for a soil test and recommendations.

## How can I plant when I have all these weeds?

Vegetation can be removed or treated with a non-residual herbicide. Allow time for the herbicide to work then use tillage such as a plow, roto-tiller or disk. Remember the more farming you do the better success you will have.

## How do I plant the seed?

Level and smooth the soil using an implement such as a harrow or rake. Break the clods down producing a firm seedbed. The soil needs to be firm enough that you barely leave a footprint (3/16"). If you do not have a means of tilling the ground some options are to burn the area or harrow it well. Remember any vegetation left will compete with your new grass. Irrigate if possible and let the ground stand for 2-3 weeks. This will allow any weeds to germinate giving another



## When can I use my new pasture?

The answer is usually one year! New seedlings are very tender and can be easily damaged by hooves and grazing. So be careful and do not over graze. Be good managers and learn to diligently rotate your livestock. When the grass is reduced to 50 % of growth from grazing, this will stimulate new re-growth.



## How do I seed and how much do I use?

The best seeding method is a pasture drill or a grain drill with a grass seed attachment, other options include broadcasting. The most important thing to remember is not to seed too deep. The most common reason for failure is placing the seed too deep.



If you are using a drill and seeding too deep try pulling the tubes out of the openers and let the seed dribble on the ground. The openers usually move enough dirt to cover the seed. If it is available rolling something light over the field, remember not too deep! The standard seeding rate for pasture is 15-20 #s per acre if drill seeding. Broadcast seeding rate increases to 20-25 #s per acre, the higher seeding rate allows for predators of the seed like birds or mice. Do not plant a cover companion crop, these will only compete for moisture and sunlight. Keep the soil moist for at least 45 days, this will establish the seedlings.

## I planted and the weeds are growing really well, where did they come from? What can I do?

One thing you can expect with a new planting is broadleaf weeds. The weeds did not come in the seed. They have been in the soil for years waiting for the ground to be disturbed for the correct environment to flourish. For the first 5-6 weeks don't worry about the weeds, wait until your new seeding is 4-5" high and mow it back to about 3". The mowing will control a lot of weeds. If results are not adequate, apply a broadleaf herbicide that will not injure grasses or grains. Always read and follow label directions when using herbicides.

## What can I do to extend the life of my pasture?

After all of this work and effort, Manage it!

- Manage the livestock, rotate their grazing.
- Keep the pasture well fed, fertilize.
- Keep the weeds out.
- Rest your pastures-give them a break.
- Renovate and restore, aerate, burn and inter-seed as needed.



## NON-NATIVE GRASSES CAN ALSO BE NOXIOUS WEEDS



## PURCHASING AND PLANTING GRASS SEED



## Okanogan County Noxious Weed Control Board

Okanogan County Noxious Weed Control Board  
P.O. Box 791  
Okanogan, WA 98840

Phone: 509-422-7165  
Email: [noxiousweeds@co.okanogan.wa.us](mailto:noxiousweeds@co.okanogan.wa.us)



**The NOXIOUS WEED BOARD urges you to purchase Certified Seed!!**



- Check the seed tag to ensure that it is the desired seed. If there is no tag, request a copy of the tag for the lot number where the seed originated.
- **Buy seed on a pure live seed (PLS) basis.**
- Keep a pound of seed out from each sack and a copy of the seed tag, the seed can be tested (about a cup full is enough).
- Check the date, you can figure approximately 40% loss in germination per year of storage.
- Be aware of new varieties and mixes that are professed to be the greatest thing that ever hit the United States. Most of these haven't been fully tested and some of these new varieties are showing a lack of winter hardiness and are not sanctioned by the NRCS or the OCNWCB. Mixes may have species in it that will not grow in this area and are expensive.

**The quality of your seed determines the quality of your land.**



- Only buy certified seed. Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and Okanogan County Noxious Weed Control Board (OCNWCB) recommendations are made for a specific purpose for a specified area based on a variety's specific attributes. Common seed provides no guarantee that these specific attributes are being met.

There are three types of seed tags:

1. White Tag Seed = Foundation Seed
2. Blue Tag Seed = Certified Seed

If you experience any problem you can register a complaint with the Washington and Producer Protection Branch at (509) 575-2750 in Yakima, WA.

- With some species, certified seed may not be available, but you can still require the seed you purchase to meet the certified seed standards for purity and germination.
- Call your local office for referrals to seed companies, for advice on soil types and climates, and for recommendations for the type of seed you should use for your
- particular application, such as livestock forage, wildlife habitat, erosion control, and weed competition.



**PRO'S & CON'S OF BROADCAST**

Pro's

- Broadcast seeding allows an individual to cover land in an easy, inexpensive and quick manner.
- It allows for the coverage of lands inaccessible by equipment.

Con's

- The lack of seed to soil contact and predation by birds and rodents.
- Lack of contact to the soil exposes seeds to the desiccation effect of wind, inhibiting the establishment of the seed.
- Seed to soil contact is more than the seed touching the ground, it refers to the amount of the seed covered by soil.
- Rodents and birds can also have a major impact on the number of seeds on the ground.
- Broadcasting also requires twice the seed rate of drilling seed.

Seedbed Preparation:

Seedbed preparation is a very critical step in Improving the chance of a successful seeding. The three most common causes of failure are:

1. Poor or inadequate seedbed preparation.
2. Seeding too deep.
3. Seeding too late.