

PLANTING GUIDE

Panicum virgatum

Switchgrass

Description: Switchgrass is a warm season perennial grass native to North America east of the Rocky Mountains. The plant is an erect bunch grass 3 to 6 feet tall with creeping rhizomes. Leaf blades are 4-24 inches long and less than 3/4 inch wide. The panicle is 6-20 inches long with spikelets less than 1/4 inch long. Seed production is poor in Florida, but of commercial quantity and quality in Texas. Vegetative reproduction is slow so seed grown out of state is necessary for establishment or rejuvenation of stands. It is adapted to well drained to somewhat poorly drained sandy soils, with slightly acid to neutral pH.

Conservation Use: Switchgrass can be used for hay production, range site improvement, wildlife habitat improvement, cut green forage, waterway vegetation, mine reclamation and dune stabilization.

Cultivars: Many are available commercially, but 'Alamo', a release from the Knox City, Texas Plant Materials Center, has performed best in Florida, and is available commercially.

Site Preparation: The soil should be well prepared by plowing, disking and packing.

Seeding Rate: 2 lbs. PLS/Ac. in rows 36-42 inches apart; 3-5 lbs. PLS/Ac. broadcasted.

Depth of Seeding: Plant at 1/4 to 1/2 inch depth and cultipack if drilled or broadcasted.

Seeding time: November 1 to March 1, and June 1 to August 1 without irrigation.

Fertilization: Apply fertilizer according to soil test recommendations, but should not be applied when planting during winter months. If needed, applications of fertilizer may be split.

Grazing: Cattle can be turned onto Switchgrass range after the stand has filled in completely and reached a height of three feet. Grazing should be terminated at a stubble height of 8-12 inches. Subsequent grazing can be initiated at 2-3 feet height.

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