

Shepherd's PMK-24 Eastern Gamagrass

A grass that will change the way livestock producers think about grass. Never have we had such a productive grass with drought-resistance and high palatability. You should **start** a minimum of five to ten acres **so** you can personally check the grass. El Niño may bring us a drought or two in the next few years. With eastern gamagrass your womes will be much less.

Some of the benefits to the grass farmer are:

1. It is a warm-season grass that greens up about as **soon** as many of the cool-season grasses, yet gives you the benefit of warm-season grass during July and August. You get the benefit of both worlds--cool-season and warm-season grass.
2. Never has to be replanted. It is like perennial corn.



This is Dad standing in the edge of gamagrass in mid-July, just before harvesting the seed.

3. Drought-resistant. The extensive root system penetrates and draws water and plant food from five to ten feet deep in the ground.
4. Easy to establish because it is resistant to Atrazine and other corn herbicides.
5. Enormous tonnage from a highly-palatable grass. Fifteen to 20,000 pounds of dry matter per acre with three to four cuttings.
6. Does well on fertile ground, but maximum growth comes when fertilized like corn. We use anywhere from 50 to 100 pounds of nitrogen per acre.
7. Early-green up is by the 1st of May; by May 15 it's two to three feet tall in North Missouri.
8. Adaptable to most of the cultivated land in the contiguous United States. PMK-24 is growing at Rochester, Minnesota and Bismarck, North Dakota. Plantings are being made in British

9. A corn planter handles the large **seeds** well. Just plant like corn. Can be drilled with a grain drill.
10. PMK-24 is a thoroughly-tested cultivar. It was introduced and tested by the USDA Plant Materials Center at Manhattan, Kansas and at the USDA Southern Plains Range Research Station at Woodward, Oklahoma. PMK-24 has been growing at Clifton Hill, Missouri since 1982.

Shepherd Farms discovered the grass on a clay road bank during an extreme drought in July of 1980. The grass was lush and green because of its large and deep root system, while **all** other grass and weeds in the area were dead, sucked dry by low-humidity wind and high temperatures. We obtained PMK-24 seed from Manhattan, Kansas in 1981 and have progressed from there with **the** largest commercial planting of eastern gamagrass. We now have **600** acres of the grass growing, with more being planted for both **seed** production and



We planted gamagrass primarily for buffalo pasture.

livestock grazing. We believe we have the most experience and the most expertise of any commercial grower of eastern gamagrass. If requested, we can send you more detailed literature on the grass.

Eastern gamagrass has a problem because it is the ice-cream grass. Why is it called "ice cream grass"? **Because** livestock will graze eastern gamagrass in preference to **all** other grasses. It is **so** palatable, livestock will eat it off into the ground **so** that it cannot exist in a pasture with uncontrolled grazing.

Eastern gamagrass is like all warm-season grasses in that, during the summertime, it stores its food reserves in the first six inches above the ground. This is unlike cool-season grasses which store their food reserves below the ground. It **can** usually stand one season of losing its food reserves, but two or three years in a row and the grass will die.



One single plant of gamagrass we use as an ornamental planting. The white bucket is a five-gallon plastic pail.

Eastern gamagrass has another problem in germination. Germination problems confounded us for several years. There seemed to be no rhyme or reason as to why one field was planted and excellent germination occurred, and the next field planted on the same day under the same conditions with the same planter had very, very poor germination.

We solved the problem by stratification (wet-cold) of the seed for six to eight weeks. UPS enables us to ship stratified seed almost anywhere if it **can** be planted in the next few days or placed in cold storage. We have large cooling and storage facilities. The seed is priced dry weight, as the stratification adds quite a bit of water weight. There is no extra charge for stratification.

We recommend the planting of ten pounds of bulk seed, dry weight, to the acre. All of our seed has been germ tested and will state the percentage on the seed bag. Bulk seed, dry or stratified, is priced at \$7.50 per pound, with large orders discounted. Seventy-five dollars an acre may seem an outrageous price for seed, but the stand will last forever. Compared with corn, the establishment cost is very low over a period of ten years.

Eastern gamagrass is now eligible for CRP and cost-sharing in many states.

PMK-24, now released and called "Pete" by the USDA Soil Conservation Service, is a highly-tested cultivar. It has been tested and refined by the SCS and the ARS since 1960 and by Shepherd Farms for the last ten years.

Come by and visit us at the farm in Clifton Hill, Missouri to **see** the growing grass. You **can** call Dan Shepherd at 816-261-4567 or 1-800-327-0211, day or evening, and let him **answer** your questions about Shepherd's PMK-24.