



Plant Materials Technical Note 6

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

Alexandria, Louisiana

January 2007

Plant Materials for Field Borders

Conservation Practice 386



DEFINITION

A field border is a band or strip of perennial vegetation established on the edge of a cropland field.

PURPOSE

A field border reduces sheet, rill, and gully erosion at the edge of fields; protects water quality by trapping sediment, chemical and other pollutants; provides a turning area for farm equipment; and provides wildlife habitat.

PLANTING CONSIDERATIONS

- Identify the primary purpose (nutrient uptake, sediment retention, wildlife habitat, etc.).
- Field borders should be a minimum of 20 feet wide and wide enough to allow turning of farm equipment.

- Identify the season-of-use (spring, summer, fall, or winter). The season-of-use will determine whether cool-season plants, warm-season plants, or a mix of both will provide the appropriate vegetative cover.
- Locate available plants or seeds.

MANAGEMENT

Apply lime and fertilizer according to soil test recommendations. Plant into a firm, weed-free seedbed. Consider a mixed planting that includes grasses, forbs and legumes for improved forage quality and plant diversity. Maintain original width of the border area. Harvest, mow, reseed and fertilize to maintain plant density and vigorous plant growth. Inspect after major storms, remove trapped sediment, and repair any eroding areas. Shut-off pesticide sprayers when turning on a field border. Delay mowing until after the nesting season for ground nesting birds and mammals.

Specifications should be prepared in accordance with the local NRCS Field Office Technical Guide and the Field Border practice standard (386).

Table 1. Species for Use in Field Borders

Species	Season of Use ^{2/}	Seeding Rate PLS LBS/ACRE	Uses ^{1/}
Perennial Grasses			
*Bahigrass	W	30	1,2,4
*Bermudagrass	W	5	1,2,4
*Dallisgrass	C	7	1,2,4
*Tall fescue	C	30	1,2,4
*Weeping lovegrass	W	3	1,2,4
Switchgrass	W	6	1,2,3,4
Indiangrass	W	1-5	1,2,3,4
Eastern gamagrass	W	2-6	1,2,3,4
Big bluestem	W	1-5	1,2,3,4
Little bluestem	W	1-5	1,2,3,4
Virginia wildrye	C	5-15	1,2,3
Forbs/Legumes^{3/}			
Partridge pea	W	4-10	1,3
Maximilian sunflower	W	1-2	1,3
Illinois bundleflower	W	4-10	1,3,4
*Arrowleaf clover	W	10	1,3,4
*Sericea lespedeza	W	30	1,3,4
*Crimson clover	C	25	1,3,4
*Red clover	W	15	1,3,4
*Subterranean clover	C	15	1,3,4
*White or Ladino clover	W	5	1,3,4
*Hairy vetch	C	30	1,2,3,4
*Singletary peas	W	35	1,3,4
*Common lespedeza	W	25	1,2,3,4
*Kobe lespedeza	W	35	1,2,3,4

* Denotes an introduced species, some may become invasive under certain conditions.

^{1/} Recommended Uses 1= Nutrient Uptake, 2= Sediment Retention, 3= Wildlife Utilization, 4= Traffic Tolerance

^{2/} W=Warm season C=Cool season.

^{3/} All legume seed shall be inoculated with the proper strain of *Rhizobia* bacteria.

Additional information about Field Borders Practice Standard 386 relating to additional species, varieties, adaptability, installation, and management of these plants can be obtained from your local Natural Resources Conservation Service Field Office.