



Plant Materials Technical Note 5

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

Alexandria, Louisiana

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Plant Materials for Contour Buffer Strips

Conservation Practice 332



DEFINITION

Contour buffer strips are strips of perennial vegetation alternated with wider cultivated strips which are farmed on the contour.

PURPOSE

Contour buffer strips slow runoff and trap sediment. Sediment, nutrients, pesticides, and other contaminants are removed from the runoff as they pass through the buffer strip.

PLANTING CONSIDERATIONS

- Identify the primary purpose of the practice (nutrient uptake, sediment retention, terrace drainage, reduce water erosion).
- 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 adequate vegetative cover.

- Identify environmental factors affecting installation (soils, topography, precipitation, and seasonal temperature).
- Locate available plants or seed.
- Cropland and rangeland use affects plant selection and management.

MANAGEMENT

Mow buffer strips to maintain appropriate vegetative density and height for trapping sediment. Fertilize buffer strips according to soil test recommendations. Spot seed or renovate buffer strip area damaged by herbicides, equipment, or unusual rainfall events. Redistribute sediment accumulations as needed to maintain uniform sheet flow along the crop/buffer boundary.

Specifications should be prepared in accordance with the local NRCS Field Office Technical Guide and the Contour Buffer practice standard (332).

Table 1. Plant Materials for Use in Contour Buffer Strips

Species	Season of Use^{1/}	Seeding Rate PLS LBS/ACRE	Uses ^{2/}
Switchgrass	W	1-3	1,2,3,4,5,6
Indiangrass	W	1-5	1,2,3,4,5
Big Bluestem	W	1-5	1,2,3,4,5
Eastern Gamagrass	W	2-6	1,2,3,4,5,6
Little Bluestem	W	1-5	1,2,3,4,5
Virginia Wildrye	C	5-15	1,2,3,4,5
*Dallisgrass	C	5-7	1,2,5,6
*Weeping lovegrass	W	1-3	1,2,3,4
*Tall Fescue	C	30-40	1,2,4,6
*Bermudagrass	W	2-5	1,2,4,5
*Bahagrass	W	15-30	1,2,4,5,6
Maximilian Sunflower	W	1-2	1,2,3,5,6
Illinois Bundleflower	W	4-10	1,2,3,5,6
Partridge Pea	W	4-10	1,2,3
Purple Prairie Clover	W	3-4	1,2,3

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

^{1/}W=Warm season C=Cool season.

^{2/}Recommended Uses Code

- 1= Nitrogen uptake
- 2= Phosphorus uptake
- 3= Wildlife Utilization
- 4= Sediment Retention
- 5= Adapted for use along streams
- 6= Adapted to high water tables

Additional information about Contour Buffer Practice Standard 332 relating to additional species, varieties, adaptability, installation, and management of these plants can be obtained from your local Natural Resources Conservation Service Field Office.