

FODDER CROPS PLANTING GUIDE

BACKGROUND



Fodder crops are cultivated primarily for animal feed. In many regions

Within Kenya, favorable periods (wet season) have abundant fodder alternate with less favorable periods (dry season) when there is almost no fodder to feed to the animals.

It is good for us to realize that keeping domestic animals comes with the responsibility to provide grazing land or supplementary fodder throughout the year.

A combination of zero grazing feeding and free range can be a possibility for increased productivity and animal production practices.



INTRODUCTION

Fodder production can do well in both semi- arid and high altitude areas that receive an average of good rainfall annually. In semi-arid areas or cases of low rainfall irrigation is a good alternative and livestock can have nutritional feeds throughout the year



In Royal Seed Company, We have different grasses namely

1. **Sudan grass**
2. **Katambora Rhodes**
3. **Kikuyu Grass(pennisetum clandestinum)**
4. **Mombaca (Panicum maximum)**
5. **Bracharia (Urochloa spp)**

Some of these grasses can be intercropped with forage legumes like Desmodium and Lucern for their high protein or they can be planted as a pure stand.

1. BRACHARIA

ECOLOGICAL REQUIREMENTS

Rainfall-should be at least 700mm/annum.

Temperature- Minimum temperature of 19°C

Soils-The soils should be well drained deep and fertile.

Spacing -20 to 30cm between plants and 50cm between rows at a rate of 3.2Kg/acre

-Bracharia can be propagated from seeds or from root splits

-Pinch with 2 fingers and the seeds should not be buried below 2cm deep.



FERTILIZER APPLICATION

Some fertilizers that can be used and their nutrient components are listed below

- i. D.A.P which contains 18% N and 48% P
- ii. C.A.N which contains 26%/27% N-This can be done annually 100kg/ha
- iii. S.S.P which contains 7 to 9% P and 18 to 21% Ca, 11 to 12 % S.
- iv. Rock Phosphate contains 30% P and 38% CaO.

When applying these fertilizers, make furrows along the propagated grasses and cover the furrows with soil.



MATURITY

Bracharia takes 4 to 5 months to reach full height and can be cut at an interval of 25 to 45 days in cases of high rainfall and 60 to 70 days in cases of low rainfall.



Good quality bracharia is achieved when prior to flowering. Identify perfect balance of biomass and nutritive value.

FEEDING BRACHARIA GRASS

Cutting/chopping-After cutting/harvesting bracharia, chop to small pieces of 1 to 2 cm long

Chopping increases voluntary intake of the feed by cattle and digestibility.

2.RHODES GRASS



Rhodes grass is a warm season perennial crop meaning it does well during the warm months and dormant during the cold seasons.

Rhodes grass has long and extensive root system making it suitable for growing in areas of low rainfall.

This grass can also withstand heavy grazing making it ideal for open grazing system.

CLIMATIC CONDITIONS

This grass can grow in areas of annual rainfall of as low as 250mm. In cases of low rainfall, irrigation may be necessary to maintain adequate moisture levels.



The ideal altitude range of Rhodes grass is between 600m and 2000m ASL. Katambora Rhodes can grow in a variety of soil types, however it performs best in fertile, well drained loamy soils.



MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

This variety can be grown as pure stand and it's typically established from seed and the best time to sow is at the onset of rainfall.

To plant the grass, make furrows 25cm apart and drill the seeds in furrows at a rate of 12kg/2.5acres then cover the soil lightly.

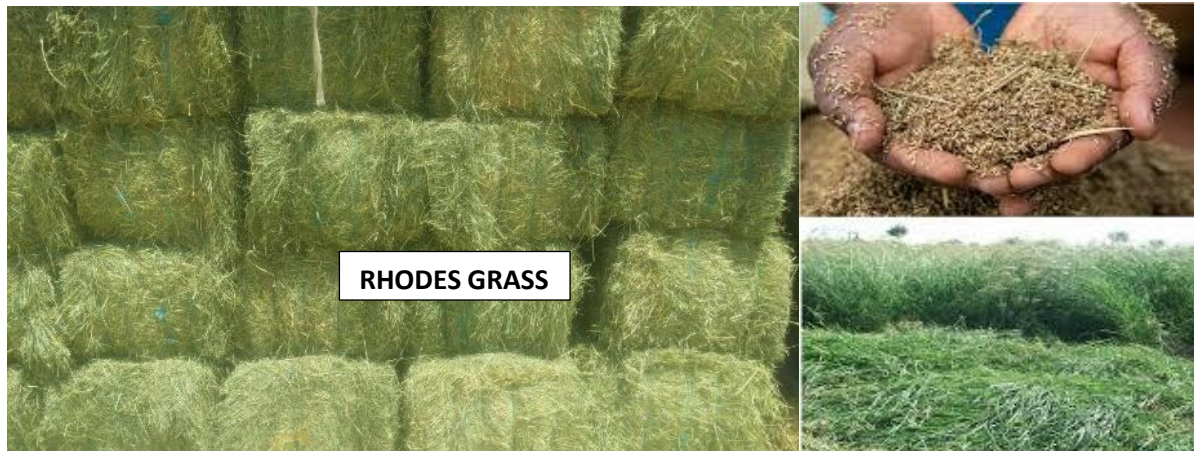
Water the grass to maintain adequate moisture and apply fertilizers as mentioned above.

HARVESTING

Start harvesting/grazing soon after the grass flower. Cut close to the ground to stimulate growth then harvest in the next flowering stage.

Under good management Rhodes grass can yield an average of 8 tonnes dry matter /ha per year.

Cutting and carrying method makes good hay and reduces overgrazing in cases of free range feeding.



RHODES GRASS

3.SUDAN GRASS



MANAGEMENT

Sudan grass should be planted in soils that are well drained and fertile with temperatures above 60°C. A uniform nursery bed is necessary to obtain a good stand of Sudan grass. High spots in the field may cause uneven irrigation and the stand will not be uniform. Low spots in the field will decrease the stands therefore decreasing the yields.

Drill the seeds at a rate of 15Kg/ha, a depth of 2 to 3.5 cm and the rows should be 18 to 36cm apart.

The soil moist enough but over irrigating could cause scalding if standing water is left on a field for too long

Fertilizer application is done in splits which is very effective to supply Nitrogen.

HARVESTING

Harvesting is done 2 to 5 times per year. Cutting should be done when 10% of sorghum start to bloom.

Delayed harvesting increases the yield but reduces the quality.





Disclaimer:

Please note that the planting guides have been compiled with utmost care, but the information should be handled by the user in accordance with his own knowledge and experience of circumstances on the ground. We therefore cannot accept any liability in connection with the information on the planting guide.

