

MARTY MORGAN, WISE COUNTY AG AGENT



Got Bahiagrass?

Paspalum notatum,,Poaceae

Varieties: Pensacola and Common

First What is Bahiagrass? and Where did it come from?

This bunchgrass has erect stems that grow from thick, scaly, horizontal rhizomes that grow on the soil surface. Leaves are mostly basal and stiff, flat or folded, and usually hairless. The seed head usually has two spike-like branches (it can have up to seven), 1 1/2 to 4 1/2 inches long, paired at the tip of the stem, one slightly below the other. Spikelets are smooth and shiny. An important hay and pasture grass in southeast Texas. Bahiagrass is a Perennial, warm-season, introduced - 6 to 24 inches tall. Fair grazing for livestock. Poor grazing for wildlife.

This warm-season perennial grass is utilized for pasture in many areas in the south but can be undesirable in bermudagrass hay meadows. Bahiagrass is often a desirable forage due to its persistence under low fertilization and close (heavy grazing pressure) grazing. It grows better on drought-prone soils with relatively low fertility and on sandier soils than do most other forages. Bahiagrass forms a deep, extensive root system which few other plants can encroach after a sod has been developed. It has a reputation as a low-quality forage because the quality of bahiagrass hay tends to be lower than the quality of bermudagrass due to less nitrogen fertilizer applied to bahiagrass stands. The grass is very tolerant of low-fertility, acid soils, but does respond to nitrogen and potassium. Once bahiagrass grows 10 to 12 inches tall, it produces little new growth and loses nutritive value with maturity. Bahiagrass is native to South America and is widely distributed in Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay.

So how do we manage unwanted Bahiagrass?

Bahiagrass can be grazed if a producer is okay with a mixed stand of forage in their pasture (bermudagrass and bahiagrass). It can also be harvested for hay. It is necessary to harvest every 30 to 35 days to maintain forage nutritive value. Neither grazing nor harvesting will lead to eradication of bahiagrass. Therefore, if it is considered an undesirable species on your property the best method of removal/control will be the use of herbicides. There are a multitude of herbicides that provide postemergence control of bahiagrass in bermudagrass pastures and hay meadows. Products that contain the active ingredient metsulfuron-methyl have activity on bahiagrass. Some trade names include Pastora and Chaparral which are two of my favorites, both available over the counter. Also Cimarron Plus, Cimarron Xtra, Cimarron Max, MSM 60, of which all contain Metsulfuron Methyl, which also controls many broadleaf weeds and some brush species as well. For list of weeds controlled, rates, and any restrictions, refer to product labels. A great place to find the label to any chemical is at <http://www.cdms.net/LabelsSDS/home/> And remember "The Label is the Law"

Note: Some of this material was borrowed from my friend and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Forage Specialist Dr. Vanessa Corriher Olson, over at the Overton Research Station.