

Establishing Tifton 85 Bermudagrass

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Tifton 85 was selected for improved nutritive value, high dry matter yield, and increased drought tolerance. Although Tifton 85 bermudagrass has been around for more than a decade, there are still many things not known about its management. Following is a summary of some of the factors regarding successful establishment and management of Tifton 85 bermudagrass.

- Initiate the planning process to establish Tifton 85 bermudagrass the year prior to actual planting.
- In late summer the year prior to planting, destroy existing perennial grass vegetation in the field with 5 quarts/acre of glyphosate. If the present pasture is bahiagrass, apply 0.3 oz of Ally instead.
- Begin initial seedbed preparation approximately two weeks after herbicide application. If perennial grasses persist, spot spray with 1½ % Roundup solution. Consider planting a small grain or ryegrass on the site to minimize soil erosion and provide winter grazing for livestock. Some fertilizer may have to be applied to the winter pasture for good forage production.
- Obtain a soil sample at the time of initial herbicide application. Apply the recommended limestone (ECCE approaching 100 if possible) during land preparation so it is incorporated in the soil and be more effective at raising soil pH.
- Identify a reliable source of Tifton 85 sprigs located well before planting time.
- Disk the small grain or ryegrass under during last seedbed preparation (March). Any recommended phosphorus should be applied at this time so it can be incorporated into the soil. Because 18-46-0 is the phosphorus source used by fertilizer dealers, some nitrogen will also be added.
- Tifton 85 prefers warm temperatures so Tifton 85 sprigs should not be dug and planted until the night temperatures reach the mid to upper 50's, This is much different than typical planting of Coastal sprigs, which are many times dug during the dormant stage.)
- Plant 30-40 bushels of Tifton 85 sprigs into a (hopefully) moist seedbed, just prior to a gentle ¾-inch precipitation event. Plant 2 to 2½ inches deep. Do not plant deeper than 3"!
- Roll the seedbed to ensure good sprig-soil contact.
- Use 1.5 to 3.0 pints/acre of Direx 4L or Diuron 4L pre-emergent herbicide within a day or two of planting. As an alternative, use 1 to 2 quarts/acre of Weedmaster within the same time period.
- When sprigs begin to green up, apply 40 to 60 lbs of actual N/acre and any potassium (K) according to soil test recommendation.
- Pay close attention to broadleaf weed competition and control with appropriate herbicides.
- Graze only lightly or only harvest for hay one time prior to mid September. Allow forage to go into the winter with 6 to 8 inches of stubble height the first year.
- Do not overseed with winter annuals the first season.

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