

Grasses

Sudangrass

AS A COVER CROP IN OHIO

This fact sheet summarizes information specific to Ohio that is available from the Midwest Cover Crops Council. For more information, see the *Midwest Cover Crops Field Guide, Third Edition*, and the Cover Crop Selector Tool found at: midwestcovercrops.org/selector-tool/



Photo credit: Jonathan Waitther, USDA-NRCS

Sorghum bicolor

Identification Information

- Wide leaves that resemble those of corn
- Tillers extensively
- Larger head than Johnsongrass with no underground rhizomes
- Brown midrib available on some hybrids

Cultural Traits

- Summer annual
- Minimum germination temperature: 65°F
- Reliable establishment window (state average): May 20–Sept. 6
- Upright growth habit: Up to 8 feet
- Preferred soil pH: 6.0–7.0

Heat tolerance: Excellent

Drought tolerance: Excellent

Low fertility tolerance: Good

Winter survival: Winter-killed

Individuals participating in financial assistance programs are required to follow NRCS Appendix A regarding seeding rates and dates. Failure to do so will jeopardize payments. Appendix A can be found in Ohio's Field Office Technical Guide, Section 4, Ecological Sciences Tools: <https://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/#/state/OH/documents/section=4&folder=-6>

Planting Information

- Drilled at ½–1 inch
 - 15–20 lbs./acre (pure live seed)
- Broadcast with shallow incorporation
 - 18–24 lbs./acre (pure live seed)
- Broadcast without incorporation is not recommended.

Additional planting information:

- 42,240 seeds/lb.
- When planting on slopes or using for forage/grazing, increase seeding rate.

Performance

- Dry matter = 4,000–8,000 lbs./acre per year
 - Biomass quantity is highly dependent on planting/termination dates and precipitation.

Nitrogen scavenger: Excellent

Soil builder: Excellent

Erosion fighter: Excellent

Weed fighter: Excellent

Grazing: Excellent

Quick growth: Excellent

Lasting residue: Very good

Mechanical forage harvest: Excellent



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Termination Information

- Tillage
 - If terminating with only tillage, multiple passes are often required.
- Chemical
- Winterkill

Additional termination information:

- Mowing after heading may terminate.
- Follow NRCS guidelines for cover crop termination dates for crop insurance compliance.

Additional performance information:

- Sudangrass has excellent biomass production and rooting capability.
- The branched, fibrous roots are excellent for building soil organic matter and reducing compaction.
- There is potential for prussic acid poisoning in livestock when plants are stressed by drought or freeze.
 - Do not graze until plants are at least 18–36 inches.
- Nitrate toxicity may be a problem when drought-stressed.
- High moisture content at harvest can be a problem for silage.
- Sudangrass is a non-host for root knot nematode, soybean cyst nematode, and sugarbeet cyst nematode.
- Sudangrass does not tolerate flooding, ponding, or shade.

Potential Disadvantages

Increased weed potential: Could be a minor problem

Increased insects/nematodes: Occasionally a minor problem

Hinders crops: Could be a moderate problem

Mature incorporation challenges: Could be a moderate problem

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(Note: This publication was adapted with consent from MCCC with content from the Midwest Cover Crops Field Guide, Third Edition, and Cover Crop Selector Tool: midwestcovercrops.org/selector-tool/.)

The Midwest Cover Crops Council (www.midwestcovercrops.org) aims to facilitate widespread adoption of cover crops throughout the Midwest by providing educational/outreach resources and programs, conducting new research, and communicating about cover crops to the public.

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Potential Advantages

SOIL IMPACTS

Subsoiler:	Very good
Frees P and K:	Good
Compaction fighter:	Excellent
Nematodes:	Very good
Disease:	Very good
Allelopathic:	Excellent
Chokes weeds:	Excellent

OTHER

Attracts beneficials:	Good
Bears traffic:	Very good
Short windows:	Excellent

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OHIO COVER CROP FACT SHEET

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