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# ‘Augusta’ Orchardgrass

West Virginia

for



*Dactylis glomerata*

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Caution: This plant may become invasive.

### Uses

The anticipated uses of ‘Augusta’ orchardgrass are: cool season forage for pasture and hay, cool season grass component in cool season grass and legume mixtures for wildlife habitat, and critical area stabilization on areas where seed mixtures are used or succession to woody species is desired. Its extensive fibrous root system is an excellent adaptation for drought tolerance. Its open growth habit allows establishment with legumes and forbs and allows succession to occur.

### Status

Please consult the [PLANTS](#) Web site and your State Department of Natural Resources for this plant’s current status (e.g. threatened or endangered species, state noxious status, and wetland indicator values).

### Description

*Dactylis glomerata* L., orchardgrass, is a persistent, cool season bunchgrass. Under dry land conditions, it usually develops distinct clumps and flower culms 15 to 18 inches tall. Leaves are usually less than 12 inches in height. When grown under irrigation or in more moist situations, it attains a much larger stature and grows together in a close stand. No vegetative spread has been observed. Orchardgrass is one of the earliest species to grow in the spring, making tremendous growth during cool conditions. Due to deep roots it also is capable of strong summer growth when conditions are favorable. Orchardgrass has about 487,000 seeds per pound.

### Adaptation and Distribution

Orchardgrass is found from Maine to the Gulf Coast states and from the Atlantic Coast to the eastern Great Plains. It is common throughout the Appalachian Mountains and is especially well-adapted to Maryland, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee. In the Northeast, orchardgrass is adapted to somewhat poorly drained to well-drained soils.

Orchardgrass performs well on different textured soils ranging from clay to gravelly loams and on shallow to deep soils. It does not grow well in saline soils and areas with high water tables. It has the ability to establish and persist in areas that receive as little as 11 inches of annual precipitation.

Orchardgrass performs best in a pH range of 5.8 – 7.0.

For a current distribution map, please consult the Plant Profile page for this species on the [PLANTS](#) Website.

### **Establishment**

A clean, firm, weed-free seedbed is recommended. Pasture and hayland seedings should be made in the late fall or very early spring. Do not seed after the spring moisture period is well advanced or a failure may occur because of drought and hot summer conditions before the grass is well established. A no-till drill with press wheels may be used; orchardgrass is easily established with common agricultural drills in the Northeast. For pasture and hayland seedings, a seeding rate of eight to ten pounds per acre is recommended. If broadcast, double the seeding rate. Adjustments in seeding rate should be made when seeding in mixtures. Seeding depth should not be more than 1/2 inch. When seeding for seed increase, planting should be in 28 to 40 inch rows. Seed at four to six pounds per acre. Seed matures evenly and is ready for harvest in mid-August. When direct combining the seed should be dried before storing.

### **Management**

Under dry land conditions the planting should not be grazed until late summer or fall of the second growing season. The plants may be severely damaged by overgrazing especially in the seedling year. Use no more than 60% of the annual growth during the winter season or 50% during the growing season. This plant responds well to a rotation-deferred grazing system.

Orchardgrass responds to good fertility management. One strategy to even out the forage production is to fertilize the stand after the first and second cutting or grazing to boost late spring and summer production. Apply fertilizer based upon regular soil tests.

### **Pests and Potential Problems**

Brown stripe, scald, rust and leaf spot are the most prevalent and destructive disease in orchardgrass. Resistance to these varies among cultivars. Japanese and green June beetle larvae feed on orchardgrass roots; sawflies feed on their tops. Little is known, however, about the economic loss caused by these insects.

### **Cultivars, Improved, and Selected Materials (and area of origin)**

The cultivar 'Augusta' was released by the Appalachian Plant Materials Center in 2008. 'Augusta' orchardgrass was collected in Augusta County, Virginia from a naturalized stand growing on a Sequoia-Berks soil; a well-drained, shallow, low fertility, acid soil with medium to low water holding capacity that occurs on hillsides and ridgetops. Foundation seed is available to commercial seed producers to establish certified production fields from the Appalachian Plant Materials Center in Alderson, West Virginia.

### **Control**

Please contact your local agricultural extension specialist or county weed specialist to learn what works best in your area and how to use it safely. Always read label and safety instructions for each control method. Trade names and control measures appear in this document only to provide specific information. USDA, NRCS does not guarantee or warranty the products and control methods named, and other products may be equally effective.

For more about *Dactylis glomerata* L., orchardgrass, and other plants and the Appalachian Plant Materials Center visit :

The [PLANTS](http://plants.usda.gov/) Web site  
<http://plants.usda.gov/>

The Plant Materials Program Web site  
<http://plant-materials.nrcs.usda.gov/>

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Old Prison Farm Road  
P. O. Box 390  
Alderson, WV 24910  
Tel. 304-445-3005  
Fax. 304-445-7049  
<http://www.wv.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/wvpmc.html>

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