



# INTRODUCED GRASS AND LEGUMES Michigan CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM CRP – CP1

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

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Photo courtesy of USDA NRCS

## What is AN INTRODUCED GRASS AND LEGUMES PLANTING?

Introduced grass and legume plantings provide soil erosion protection and habitat for a variety of wildlife.

Introduced grasses and legumes were introduced to Michigan from other countries, and are typically found in pastures, hay fields, and lawns. Some of the more common introduced grasses that grow well in Michigan include timothy, orchard grass, redtop, and smooth brome. Introduced legumes include alfalfa and red, ladino, and alsike clovers. These are all “cool-season” plants since they grow best in the cool temperatures in the spring and fall.

Introduced grasses and legumes can provide nesting cover for wildlife. However, they tend to not stand up well to snow and ice, and therefore provide marginal winter cover. Legumes will also provide a good seed and insect source for young birds.

Introduced grasses and legumes will live a long time after establishment. However, legumes typically dwindle over time and therefore specific management is necessary to ensure their presence.

## ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for this practice with the General or Continuous Conservation Reserve Program, the land must have a cropping history (4 out of 6 years from 1996-2001). Further, for the Continuous Conservation Reserve Program, the land must be within 2000 feet of an approved public wellhead.

## CRP POLICY

For General CRP, if 40 points were awarded for the National Ranking cover type factor, **timothy, orchard grass, & redtop plus at least 1 Introduced Legume** will be planted. If 10 points were awarded for the National Ranking cover type factor, **at least 2 Introduced grasses with or without legumes** will be planted. Any other non-native plantings are not eligible.

Introduced grasses and legumes will be established according to the Conservation Cover (327) standard in the local Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG), and they must be planted within 12 months of contract approval to remain in compliance. If circumstances beyond the landowner's control prohibit the planting within the first 12 months, the local FSA County Committee may approve an extension to the next planting season.

## PLANTING

It is very important to plant non-native grasses & legumes into a weed-free, firm seedbed. If the field is currently in cropland, weed control efforts should begin prior to planting. Use herbicide or tillage to eliminate competing vegetation. If necessary for erosion control, seed a temporary cover. Eliminate the temporary vegetation at planting time with tillage or herbicides.

**If the field is currently in sod**, begin weed control efforts using broad-spectrum herbicides in the fall. Apply herbicides again after the spring green-up prior to planting (if possible, a prescribed burn prior to spring green up to remove the dead litter from the fall treatment will provide best results).

Contact your local Michigan State University Extension Agent for specific herbicide recommendations. **Apply all herbicides according to the label.**

Plant grasses and legumes according to the attached plan/design sheet, and apply lime and fertilizer according to needs determined by a soil test and MSU recommendations for the grasses.

Use a specialized no-till drill that is able to handle the grass seeds (possibly available at some local Conservation District offices, DNR offices, Pheasants Forever chapters, etc). Plant the seeds **no deeper than** 1/8 inch.

If a grass drill is not available, the seed may be broadcast or aerial seeded. In either case, the seedbed

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must be worked up and firmed with a cultipacker or similar equipment. A carrier such as potash may also be needed in order to spread the seed evenly. **After seeding, the site must be rolled or cultipacked to ensure proper seed to soil contact.** Plant the seeds **no deeper than** 1/8 inch.

For grasses, mow, burn, or apply herbicides as needed to control unwanted vegetation until a **Final** Status Review is issued. Mow when competing weeds are taller than the planted vegetation, and at a height above the planted vegetation. **Non-Native grasses will not be mowed lower than 4" - 6"** to ensure plant health.

For additional information on establishment and maintenance, see the following NRCS – Michigan Conservation Sheets (available at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/efotg/> in Section IV): “Establishing Cool Season Grasses and Legumes for Conservation Cover”, “Prescribed Burning”, &/or others.

For additional information on herbicide controls, contact your local MSU Extension Agent. **Always apply herbicides according to labeled directions.**

## OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

Undesirable plants, insects, and pests shall be controlled, including such maintenance as necessary to avoid detrimental effects to the surrounding land. Some of the most common pests that need controlled on CRP acreage include Autumn Olive, Multiflora Rose, Spotted Knapweed, Quackgrass, etc.

**After** the Final Status Review, maintain the planting according to your CRP conservation plan. Maintenance activities are allowed only on a spot basis and only if necessary to maintain stand health, maintain stand diversity, or control pests that will damage the CRP cover or adjacent lands. **MOWING** is only authorized between Aug 1<sup>st</sup> and Aug 20<sup>th</sup> to protect ground-nesting wildlife and to allow re-growth for winter cover. Other maintenance activities (herbicides, burning, etc.) are only allowed between August 1 – May 1<sup>st</sup> (i.e. -

outside of the Primary Nesting and Brood-Rearing season). If maintenance activities are needed at times other than these, the FSA County Committee **must** approve the maintenance activity **prior to** the activity occurring.

**Mowing for generic weed control or for cosmetic purposes is prohibited.**

## MID-CONTRACT MANAGEMENT

All new CRP contracts must have mid-term contract management activities scheduled that are site specific and will ensure plant diversity, wildlife habitat, and protection of soil and water resources. Management activities that will ensure these benefits in Introduced grass and legume plantings include prescribed burning (according to an approved burn plan), disking, grass-specific herbicide applications, and interseeding of legumes. All management activities must be performed according to NRCS Standards and Specifications as found in the FOTG, and CRP policy.

## MANAGED GRAZING/HAYING

These plantings may be used for managed haying or grazing. These activities must be performed according to NRCS Standards and Specifications as found in the FOTG and CRP policy. The same acreage may not be hayed or grazed more than once every 3 years. Annual CRP rental payments will be reduced based on the value of the forage removed. All managed haying and grazing activities must be included in the conservation plan prior to harvesting the forage. See the attached information for specifics relating to Managed Grazing/Haying in CRP.

## OTHER MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS

For optimum wildlife habitat, plant a diversity of grasses and legumes. This mixture will provide nesting cover, flowers for pollinating insects, and a good seed and insect source for food.

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# INTRODUCED GRASSES AND LEGUMES PLANTING DESIGN WORKSHEET CRP CP-1

**Landowner:** \_\_\_\_\_ **County:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Farm:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Tract:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Field(s):** \_\_\_\_\_ **Acres:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

RECOMMENDED SPECIES and SEEDING RATE (lb./ac = Pounds per Acre)							
40 PT. MIX	RATE Lb./acre	TOTAL = (RATE X Acres)	10 PT. MIX	RATE Lb./acre	TOTAL = (RATE X Acres)		
<input type="checkbox"/>		0.0 Lb.	<input type="checkbox"/>		0.0 Lb.		
		0.0 Lb.			0.0 Lb.		
		0.0 Lb.			0.0 Lb.		
		0.0 Lb.			0.0 Lb.		
		0.0 Lb.			0.0 Lb.		

**NOTES:** \_\_\_\_\_

### BEFORE PLANTING in Year:

Herbicide<sub>1</sub> (per label): \_\_\_\_\_ Dates = \_\_\_\_\_  
 Herbicide<sub>2</sub> (per label): \_\_\_\_\_ Dates = \_\_\_\_\_  
 Tillage: \_\_\_\_\_ Dates = \_\_\_\_\_  
 Temporary Seeding: \_\_\_\_\_  
 **Apply lime and fertilizer according to an approved soil test and MSU recommendations for “establishing cool season grass and legumes.”**  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### PLANTING METHOD in Year:

**Planting Method:** \_\_\_\_\_  
 Dates = \_\_\_\_\_  
 (If unforeseen circumstances prohibit the planting of the grass by this date, please contact our office as soon as possible)

### POST-PLANTING MAINTENANCE for Pest Control

**Mowing: BEFORE FINAL STATUS REVIEW** = mow 4-6” high when the weeds are 12” taller than the planted grasses  
**AFTER FINAL STATUS REVIEW\* = 4-6” MINIMUM Mowing Height\***  
 Herbicide\*\* (per label): \_\_\_\_\_  Prescribed Burning\*\*: According to an approved plan  
 Other:\*\* \_\_\_\_\_

\*NOTE: after the Final Status Review has been issued, **MOWING** will be conducted between August 1 & 20, and weeds will be treated on a “spot” basis only, unless prior approval is granted by the County Committee.

\*\*NOTE: after the Final Status Review has been issued, other maintenance activities will be conducted between August 1 & May 1, and weeds will be treated on a “spot” basis only, unless prior approval is granted by the County Committee.

**LOCATION AND LAYOUT SKETCH & ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**