

# AGRONOMY

UNIVERSITY OF  
FLORIDA

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IFAS EXTENSION

# NOTES

November, 2003

## DATES TO REMEMBER

Feb. 24-25, 2004 FL Weed Science Society Annual Meeting, Ft. Pierce  
May 27, 2004 Corn Silage Field Day, Citra

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## **Crimson Clover (for Northern Florida)**

Crimson clover is one of the most reliable cool season annual clovers that we can plant in north and northwest Florida. It is usually grazed but can be mechanically harvested.

“Mechanical Harvesting: Mixtures of crimson clover and winter annual grasses can make excellent quality hay or silage. Early spring growth of crimson clover often contains more than 20% crude protein and can be as high as 80% digestible. Even at full bloom the forage may contain 12 to 14% crude protein and 60 to 65% digestible nutrients on a dry matter basis. Crimson clover alone often produces 1 to 2 tons of dry matter per acre, while mixtures with winter annual grasses usually yield considerably higher.

Unfortunately, spring weather conditions in the Southeast often make hay harvest at the correct time difficult. In addition, crimson clover forage dries slowly, prolonging the period of vulnerability to rain damage. Consequently, forage of winter annuals, including crimson clover, is most frequently harvested by grazing or as silage.

Winter annual mixtures containing crimson clover planted on a prepared seedbed in early autumn can often be grazed until early to mid-March and still produce a hay or silage harvest. Harvest should be made at the early bloom stage of the clover. Regrowth from crimson clover after mechanical harvesting is usually poor, so only one harvest can be expected to contain significant quantities of clover.” Source: Ball, D. M., and G. D. Lakefield, 2000. Crimson Clover Circular 00-1. Oregon Clover Commission, Salem, Oregon.

CGC

## **Forage Testing**

You may be interested in knowing the nutritional content of your hay. The U. of F. IFAS Extension Service no longer tests hay, but there are several good labs that can do the job at a moderate cost. Consult the fact sheet “Forage

Testing” which can be found at the web site, <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/AA192> or pick up a copy at the county extension office. This fact sheet will provide information on how to collect a sample, and where to send it, etc. One of the popular labs is Dairy One which has the following web site:

<http://www.dairyone.com/Forage/services/Forage/forage.htm>.

Auburn University operates a forage testing lab within their soil testing facility. Information is available at this web site:

<http://www.ag.auburn.edu/dept/ay/soiltest.htm> .

CGC

## **Get Ready to Burn Bermudagrass Hay Fields and Pastures in Order to Reduce Spittlebug**

If you do not have experience with burning, you will need to check with the local county forester or perhaps others to determine what permits are needed and how they are acquired. Will you need a “certified burner” license, etc. Be prepared so that when conditions are correct for burning you will not be delayed. Fields should be burned just before green up. This will catch and kill some of the early germinating weeds as well as reduce the spittlebug infestation. Try to burn after a rain while the soil surface is moist and burn with the wind. This will reduce the chances that the fire might get too hot and damage the forage plants.

CGC

## **Get Ready to Plant Perennial Peanut in February or March**

If you intend to plant perennial peanut no-til into a bahiagrass sod, then you will need to kill the bahiagrass before frost. Apply Roundup herbicide 3 to 6 weeks before the first expected frost. This should allow enough time to absorb the Roundup and kill the plants.

If you intend to prepare a clean-tilled seedbed, then plan to do the initial tillage in December. This will allow some time for plant material to rot before final seedbed preparation and planting.

CGC

### **Overseeding Warm Season Perennials with Cool Season Annuals**

When overseeding pastures or hay fields, wait until growth slows and remove all excess forage by grazing or mechanical harvest before planting. Overseeding works best where there is plentiful soil moisture throughout the growing season. This is more likely to occur in northwest Fl. and less likely to occur in southern peninsular Fl. due to rainfall patterns. In fact overseeding is generally not recommended in southern peninsular Fl. especially on bahiagrass. Site or soil type also plays an important role in successfully growing cool season annuals: Soils and sites must be carefully selected. Clay soils, sandy soils underlain by clay, (and moist flatwoods soils in some locations) produce the best results. Of course if irrigation is available, these forages can be grown almost anywhere.

Overseeding bahiagrass pastures: The bahiagrass sod should be cultivated to obtain 30 to 50 percent disturbance when overseeding. This will reduce the bahiagrass competition with the ryegrass or clover seedlings. Ryegrass overseeding on bahiagrass in southern peninsular Fl. is successful in some years (one out of 10 ?), but small grains are rarely if ever successful.

Overseeding bermudagrass hay fields in northern Fl.: If overseeding is done with the intention of harvesting the crop as hay or silage, then overseeding with small grains and/or crimson clover may work best as compared to ryegrass. Ryegrass has a longer growing season and will compete with the bermudagrass in the spring especially if it is allowed to accumulate for harvesting as hay or silage. This competition may be detrimental to the bermudagrass stand. On the other hand, if it is grazed, then the competition may be controlled.

Overseeding Perennial Peanut: If overseeding for hay production or grazing, again oats or one of the other small grains or crimson clover would be the better choices. I have seen crimson clover overseeded on a small perennial peanut pasture and used for creep grazing that was very successful.

CGC

### **Keep Crop Rotations in Mind for Peanuts**

Many first-time peanut growers had excellent yields in 2003 because of favorable weather, but in many cases the peanuts were planted on fields that had not grown peanuts in recent years, and perhaps never. Some of these fields may have been in pastures or not cropped for long periods, which could have contributed to a lack of disease or nematode problems. Such growers should realize that if they want to continue having the opportunity for high yields, they should provide crop rotations for future crops of peanuts. Grass crops, especially bahiagrass, are excellent rotation crops for peanuts. For best results, peanuts should not be grown on the same land more often than once three to four years.

EBW

### **Peanut Crop Report**

It appears that the 2003 United States' peanut crop will be one of the best on record. The average yield is estimated to be in excess of 3000 pounds per acre, with all producing areas having good to excellent crops. Only a small percentage of the crop would be endangered by extreme weather conditions, such as freezes or floods. Despite a reduced acreage from 2002, the total supply of US peanuts will be greater in 2003 because of the high yields. The 2003 supply will exceed domestic requirements, which provides a substantial supply available for export. The export price will determine the volume that would likely be exported.

EBW

## **Peanut Pod Blaster**

To use the peanut maturity profile method, often called the 'hull-scrape' method, the outer layer of the peanut hull must be removed in order to expose the color of the middle layer which indicates the maturity level of the pod. The pods are then arranged on a profile board which provides an objective basis for estimating the maturity status of the peanuts and therefore predicting the ideal time to dig the peanuts. The original means of removing the outer layer of the pod was to scrape each pod with a knife, which was a slow process. The wet pod blaster was later developed, which used high air pressure to blow a mixture of water and glass beads over the pods while in a rotating basket to remove the outer layer of the pods. This equipment greatly increased the speed of the operation, but the cost of the specialized and supporting equipment, plus supplies, resulted in only the larger counties having such facilities. In most cases, the county extension office, through contributions and other funds, provided this valuable service to the growers. A more simple method which uses an electric-powered pressure washer has been developed and appears to be effective as well as being less expensive and more convenient than the blaster that uses air pressure and glass beads.

EBW

## **Planning for Tobacco Plants in 2004**

Growers normally make a decision in November or December on their expected source of plants for the next crop. The source may be from plant beds or greenhouses that the farmer owns, or he may enter into cooperative production with neighbors or contract with a commercial grower.

Whatever the source, the plants should be of the variety desired, free of diseases, and of good quality. Since plant beds are the source of most of the plants used, preparation and fumigation of the beds should be done in November or early December. Prior to fumigation the bed area should be prepared by incorporating weed or crop residue with the soil so that it will

decompose and not interfere with the movement of the fumigant gas throughout the soil. Clumps of trash or plant debris can keep weed seed and disease organisms from being killed by the fumigant. The final bed preparation before fumigation should leave the area slightly raised for good drainage. Allow enough room around the beds so that if needed, ditches can be dug to prevent water from washing over or standing on the beds. If rain is not adequate, irrigate the area a few days prior to fumigation so that weed seed will be softened and thereby more likely to be killed by the fumigant. At fumigation the soil should be slightly moist and the air temperature should be above 55 degrees. Remember that most fumigants contain 25-33 percent chloropicrin, which does not volatilize as rapidly as methyl bromide, thereby requiring a longer exposure and aeration period than methyl bromide alone. A two-week aeration period is needed to be sure that all of the fumigant has been lost from the soil and it would be safe to seed the beds.

EBW

## **Tobacco Market Update**

All of the southern flue-cured tobacco markets and contract centers have closed for the year, and the more northern markets will close very soon as almost all of the 2003 crop has been marketed. For Florida markets, over 10 million pounds were delivered and the average price was \$1.85 per pound. Total pounds delivered to all contract centers in the United States thus far is over 410 million pounds and has been sold for an average price of over \$1.86 per pound. The US auction markets thus far has received over 91 million pounds and for an average price of over \$1.79 per pound.

EBW

## **Tobacco Quota Buyout Developments**

Progress on legislation to provide for a tobacco quota buyout was slowed in October when a senate committee reached an impasse on the

level of FDA control of tobacco products that would be allowed. The FDA legislation is separate from the quota buyout legislation, but it is expected that only a bill that combined the two proposals would have a chance for passage. At this time it appears that legislation on either bill alone, or a combined bill will have to wait until 2004.

EBW

**Nitrogen Use and Lime Needs**

How quickly a soil becomes acid is dependent on several things including N source being applied to crops. Anhydrous ammonia requires the highest amount of calcium carbonate equivalent (2,960 lbs. per ton of nitrogen material), followed by ammonium sulphate, urea, with ammonium nitrate and nitrogen solutions being about the same depending on the ratio of urea and ammonium nitrate in the solution (about 1,180 lbs. of calcium carbonate to neutralize a ton of these materials). It is common to use N solutions with S in many areas because the cost is normally less than dry material. Keep a close check on pH when high rates of N are being used on crops like corn, cotton, or hay fields.

DLW

**October Crop Report**

The National Agricultural Statistics Service provided the following crop estimates in their October report:

Crop	Florida		United States	
	Harvested Acres (x1000)	Yield per Acre	Harvested Acres (x1000)	Yield per Acre
Peanuts	107	2900 lb	1277	3095 lb
Tobacco, all	4.3	2500 lb	413	2044 lb
Sugarcane	441	40.0 ton	997	36.2 ton

The October estimates included corn acreage for Florida, which was 85,000 acres planted with 28,000 acres to be harvested for grain. The grain yield estimates will be made in the year-end summary in January, as well as the corn silage estimates. Based on the above acreage estimates, more acres of Florida

**Yield Responses to Deep Tillage**

Years of research with small grains as well as row crops show that all of these crops respond to deep tillage where a compaction layer occurs. A high percentage of the slow growth associated with small grains is due to lack of rooting depth. Yield increase of 25% or more may be expected from deep tillage on small grains as well as other crops if irrigation is not supplied. Deep tillage with a subsoiler or chisel plow or ripping under the row of row crops does pay.

DLW

**Publications**

Updated Publications

SS-AGR-84 Fall Forage Update - 2003

NEW Publications

SS-AGR-194 Cotton Cultural Practices and Fertility Management

SS-AGR-199 Soils and Fertilization for Florida Rice Production

corn will probably be cut for silage than will be harvested for grain. This has been the trend in recent years. Nationally the estimated corn yield per acre will be 142.2 bushels, which would be a record if it is realized. The total corn production would also be a record, breaking the previous record set in 1994. Soybean yield and production in United States will be down this year.

EBW

The use of trade names does not constitute a guarantee or warrant of products named and does not signify approval to the exclusion of similar products.

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