



University of Wisconsin-
Extension
Cooperative Extension

What is the best forage for late planting?

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We have tested several forage crops for emergency planting at various dates across the state over the last two years. We tested sudangrass, sorghum-sudangrass, sorghum, Japanese millet, Siberian millet, German millet, soybeans alfalfa and small grains planted on May 1, June, 1 and July 1. After analyzing all the data, our recommendation is that corn for silage is the best crop for emergency planting at any date and location in Wisconsin where silage can be made. It was generally the highest yielding crop at all sites and at all planting dates and was among the highest crops in forage quality.

Sorghum-sudangrasses would be recommended for hay in southwestern Wisconsin and where above average temperatures are expected. We have had situations where they were planted in central or eastern Wisconsin and never got over 6 inches tall because the weather was too cool during the growing season. While brown midrib types are higher in quality than other sorghum-sudangrasses, even brown midrib types of sorghum-sudangrasses are not as high in quality as corn silage (see table 2.). Other millets are not recommended because they were both lower yielding and lower in forage quality.

Sorghum out yielded corn silage one year at Arlington. Sorghum is a very warm weather crop and yielded well in the hot weather of 2003. It would have some potential for late plantings in Southwest Wisconsin and to the south of Wisconsin.

In summary, the forage crop that will produce the highest yield of high quality forage at any planting date is corn for silage. Corn hybrids should be planted that will mature to harvest maturity by frost. If planting is too late for maturity, then later season types should be planted that will reach pollination by frost. Sorghum-sudangrasses are adapted to southwestern Wisconsin and are best if hay, rather than silage, is desired. They may not produce much dry matter in central and eastern Wisconsin if weather is average to cool. No other millet, soybean or other emergency crop produced as much tonnage or was as high in quality.

Table 1. Yield of emergency forage crops at different planting dates, Spooner, Marshfield, and Arlington, WI, 2003-2004

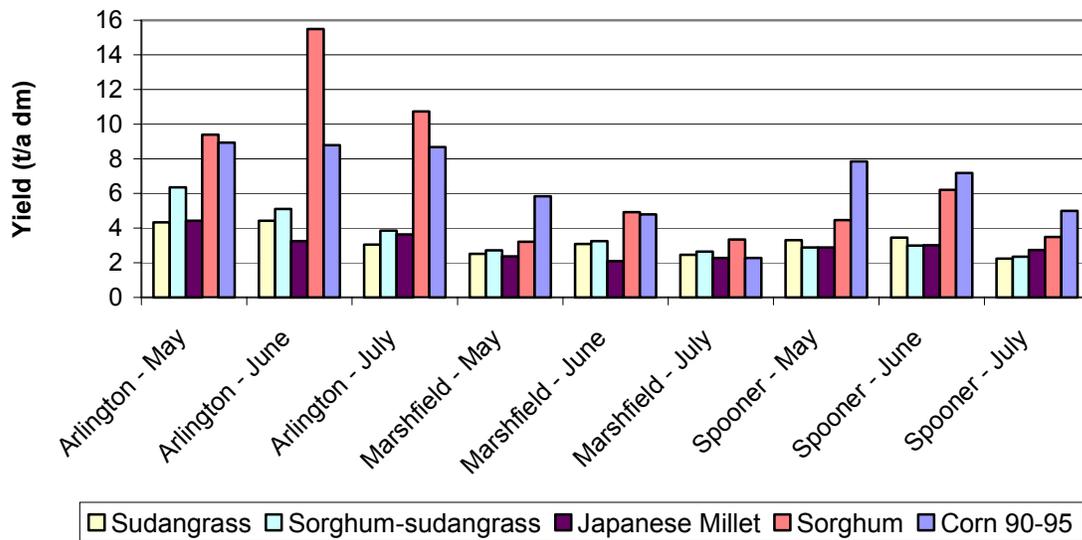


Table 2. Milk per ton of forages averaged across planting date and locations (Spooner, Marshfield, and Arlington, WI)

