

Table 5. Warm Season vs. Cool Season Grasses

<p>Warm-Season Grasses: These are native grasses of the prairies and the Northeast. They grow in the summer, benefiting from groundwater when cool-season grasses are inactive. Because warm-season grasses are inactive in the winter and spring, they are susceptible to invasion by other grasses and weeds if stubble is removed. Warm-season grasses are drought resistant, winter hardy, and adapted to sandy, infertile soils. These grasses contain more nutrients than cool-season grasses and are equal or superior for livestock digestibility and yield. Because native grasses are mowed and grazed later in the season than cool-season forage crops, they provide nutritious feed for livestock for a greater portion of the year. Warm-season grasses provide suitable breeding habitat for ground-nesting birds.</p> <p>Common warm-season grasses used for range and pasture in the Northeast: big bluestem, little bluestem, Indian grass, and switchgrass (mixtures are better for bird habitat; pure switchgrass stands can create poor bird habitat). See Table 3 for a list of seed sources.</p>	<p>Cool Season Grasses: Cool-season grasses are primarily non-native species that have been introduced for crop and pastureland because the moist, cool spring and fall weather in the Northeast provides ideal growing conditions. They grow in the spring and fall but are dormant during the summer. Cool-season grasses do not grow well in dry and/or nutrient-poor soils. They can be grazed closer to the ground than warm-season grasses without reducing vigor in summer and winter. Cool-season grasses form a dense cover that provides less suitable nesting habitat for some ground-nesting birds.</p> <p>Typical cool-season grasses planted in the Northeast: timothy grass, Kentucky bluegrass, and orchard grass (tall fescue and reed canary grass are sometimes planted but are invasive, provide no diversity in vegetative structure, and create thick, dense stands that prevent use by nesting grassland birds).</p>
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