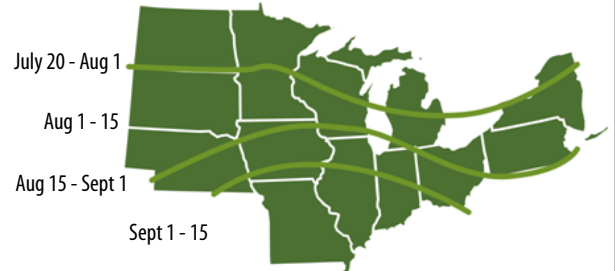


Late-Summer Alfalfa Seeding Tips

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Alfalfa farmers in the Midwest and Northeast often view spring as the “best” time for successful stand establishment. But late-summer seeding is also a viable option. Benefits include less competition from weeds at establishment, ability to harvest earlier next year, and establishment cost reduction. With attention to detail and weather cooperation, late-summer seeding can be an outstanding way to establish alfalfa, putting you ahead of the game the next year. Keys to planting a successful crop:

Figure 1. Recommended late-summer seeding dates by region.



- Plant 6 weeks before first hard frost; 8 weeks is better (Figure 1). Achieving 6-8" of growth before first hard frost provides adequate winterhardiness. Timely late-summer seeding can result in stronger seedling establishment, higher yield potential, and greater profitability.
- Selecting the right variety can have a major impact on stand profitability. Always plant a variety with high-yield potential, persistence, and multiple-pest resistance. Remember, “cheap” seed often costs more in the long run due to reduced yield potential, lower forage quality, and shorter stand life. HarvXtra® alfalfa varieties are excellent candidates for late-summer seeding. In addition to providing higher-quality forage or delaying harvest and optimizing yield potential, they also come with the Roundup Ready® weed control system.
- Don’t rotate alfalfa immediately after alfalfa. Autotoxic compounds from prior alfalfa will be released into the soil after plowdown, causing poor stand establishment and reduced productivity over the life of the new stand. Also know your field’s pH, fertility, and herbicide history. Soil testing is a must; pH should be 6.5-7.0, and phosphorus (P) and potassium (K) levels should be in the high range.
- Seed when moisture is present. Do not plant into dry seedbeds hoping for rain. Preserve moisture by using minimum tillage or no-till.
- A firm seedbed ensures proper seed depth and maximizes emergence. Soil type also interacts with seeding depth; alfalfa can be seeded deeper (up to 1") on light soils, while seeding ¼-½" deep is recommended on heavier soils. Packing immediately after planting is always a good idea, regardless of equipment used. Excellent seed-to-soil contact is crucial to get the most from every alfalfa seed you plant.
- We recommend a seeding rate of 18-20 lbs/ac when clear-seeding alfalfa (no nurse crop or companion grass).
- Do not use a nurse (companion) crop to control weeds. Weeds are seldom a problem in late-summer seedings, and nurse crops compete for light, water, and nutrients. If using a nurse crop on highly erodible soils, seed the nurse crop at significantly lower rates (e.g., ¼ bu/ac of oats).
- Do not harvest your new seeding this fall. New plants need to store up enough energy reserves for successful winter survival.

For more late-summer seeding advice and assistance in selecting the right HarvXtra® alfalfa or Roundup Ready® alfalfa trait and conventional varieties for your acres, contact your local alfalfa seed supplier.