Texas Agricultural Extension Service
The Texas A&M University System

SCS-1998-06

Questions and Answers About Tifton 85 Bermudagrass

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What is Tifton 85 bermudagrass?

Tifton 85 is a hybrid bermudagrass that was jointly developed and officially released in 1992 by the USDA-ARS and the University of Georgia Coastal Plain Experiment Station in Tifton, Georgia. It is a cross between a selection from South Africa (PI 290884) and Tifton 68.

What does Tifton 85 look like?

Tifton 85 is quite different in appearance from Coastal bermudagrass. Tifton 85 is taller, has larger stems and broader leaves, and is darker in color. Additionally, Tifton 85 produces larger but fewer rhizomes than Coastal.

Is Tifton 85 winter hardy?

One of the biggest concerns with this variety has been winter hardiness. Tifton 68, one of its parents, is a cold-susceptible variety. Tifton 85 has been evaluated in Texas since 1991 without winter hardiness problems. Observational plots established as far north as Gainesville (Cooke County), have not had any problems with winter injury. Although winter hardiness has not been a problem to date, growers in the more northern counties of Texas should be conscious of the potential for winter injury.

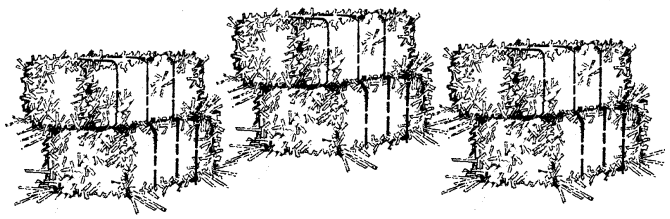
How does Tifton 85 yield in comparison to Coastal bermudagrass?

In most replicated field trials that have been conducted, Tifton 85 has consistently produced higher yields than Coastal bermudagrass. The following table summarizes the results of yield trials conducted in Texas at several locations:

Table 1. The average performance of bermudagrass varieties in Texas. Yields are expressed as a percentage of Coastal

Variety	Overton* (1992-94)	Bryan (1992-97)	Thrall (1996-97)
Coastal	100	100	100
Tifton 85	***120***	***138***	***118***
Jiggs	125	115	100
Grazer	78	69	65
World Feeder	82	89	--

**At the Overton location, Tifton 85 produced higher yields than Coastal in 1992 and 1993, but yields were equivalent in 1994.*



How digestible is Tifton 85?

Despite its larger stem and leaves, Tifton 85 has a higher degree of digestibility than Coastal. The following table represents the results of digestibility trials conducted at the University of Georgia.

Table 2. The percent in vitro dry matter digestibility (IVDMD) of Tifton 85 and Coastal bermudagrass.

Variety	Harvested at 3 weeks	Harvested at 6 weeks
Tifton 85	61.7	56.9
Coastal	51.4	50.8

Note: The higher the number, the more digestible the forage.

What is the best method of establishing Tifton 85?

Tifton 85 can be established from both sprigs or tops. Sprigs should be dug in March to mid-April at first greenup and, after a 2-3 week growth period, can be dug throughout the summer. Tifton 85 sprigs should not be planted deeper than 3". Tops can be planted from late April to May. An ideal top is at least 6 weeks old, approximately 18-24" tall, and has at least 6 nodes. Tops should not be allowed to wilt and should be planted as soon as possible after harvesting. With both sprig and top planting, it is essential that the soil be firmly packed after planting and appropriate weed control strategies be implemented.

Where can I obtain Tifton 85 sprigs and/or tops?

Your County Extension Agent should have a list of local growers of Tifton 85. Additionally, the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) maintains a list of certified growers of Tifton 85. Contact the TDA at (409) 542-3691 to obtain a copy of this list.

What other TAEX forage publications are available?

Your local County Extension office should have a supply of the following publications:

Bulletin 6035
Forage Bermudagrass: Selection, Establishment and Management

Bulletin 5038
Suggestions for Weed Control in Pasture and Forages

Leaflet 2206
Fertilizing Effects on Grazing and Haying Operations

Leaflet 2207
Fertilization of Improved Pastures

Also see our website at:
http://soil-testing@tamu.edu