GROW GUATEMALA GRASS FOR INCREASED MILK YIELD

Guatemala grass

IN NAPIER STUNT DISEASE AFFECTED AREAS

More information can be obtained from:
Director KARI Box 57811-00200 Nairobi
Email: director@kari.org
Centre Director, KARI-Kakamega
P.O. BOX 169-50100, Kakamega
karikakamega@yahoo.co.uk
DLPO & DLEOs Kiambu, Muranga, Nyeri, Kakamega, Bungoma, Busia, Vihiga and Siaya Counties


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Introduction
Guatemala grass is a fodder that grows well in areas where Napier and other fodders do well. It is an alternative fodder crop that withstands Napier stunt and smut diseases which can be grown to increase livestock production.

Where to grow Guatemala grass
Guatemala grows well in mid to high altitude areas of western Kenya.

Source of Guatemala grass planting material
• KARI Centres.
• All Agricultural Training Centres (ATCs).
• Ministry of Livestock Divisional Extension Offices (DLEOs).

How to plant Guatemala grass
• Prepare root splits of 30 cm length.
• Plant 1 root split per hole.
• Plant with either TSP or DAP fertilizer at the rate of 1 soda bottle top per hole (1 bag TSP/DAP/acre), or FYM/compost manure at the rate of 2 handfuls per hole (32 bags) per acre.
• Cover with soil firmly.

How to manage Guatemala grass
• Weed whenever weeds appear.
• Harvest Guatemala grass first 3-4 months after establishment.
• Maintain a stubble height of 10 cm to encourage quick re-growth.
• Further harvesting should be done at 8-10 weeks (2-2½ months) intervals.
• After every second cutting, apply CAN at the rate of 1 bottle top/stool or 2 bags per acre, or apply two handfuls FYM/compost per stool (4 tons FYM/compost per acre).

How to utilize Guatemala grass
• Well managed Guatemala grass produces 4 to 6 tons DM per acre and this can be enough to feed one dairy cow per year.
• Harvest and chop to 2-3 cm and feed fresh to livestock.

• Make silage when plenty for dry season feeding.

Benefits of Guatemala grass
• Is easy to establish using root splits.
• Is not affected by Napier stunt or Napier smut diseases.
• Grows well in many regions of Kenya.
• Easily rotated with other crops.
• Produces high forage (75% of the forage produced by Bana Napier variety)
• Has a moderate rate of re-growth after harvesting.