How to choose a winter annual forage variety

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Each year forage and grain specialists and breeders gather to review data from the UGA statewide variety test. The data collected in this test are used to guide our state's variety reccomendations. This article will discuss what factors in our decisions and provides the updated lists for winter 2023-2024.

What makes a good variety?

Well, we should really clarify this by adding what makes a good variety for Georgia growers. There are incredible forages grown around the country and world, but they are not all suited for our growing conditions. Varieties that are bred and released by a specific company or university were intentionally chosen to meet the needs for a specific region. So a good variety in the Northeast US will likely not grow as well in the humid Southeast, and vice versa. Although we tend to focus on yield and quality for determining a good variety, there are several other contributing factors. Georgia producers need varieties that can tolerate our unique and ever-changing winter weather conditions. The varieties need to resist our unique disease and insect pressures. We also look for those varieties that are reliable and perform well for their intended use over multiple growing seasons. They should germinate well and establish quickly when planted in a range of soil types and conditions across those multiple seasons. So how do we decide which varieties to recommend?

How do we make variety recommendations?

Some of our recommendations are made annually, while others are updated every few years as the market demands change. Some of the biggest factors we consider are the production potential of the forage, its relative quality, and its stability or reliability across production years and various environments. Another big factor is the availability of the planting material. As new varieties come onto the market, we look at how they compare to our existing recommendations. The new releases need to be at least as productive and offer more benefits than the varieties currently recommended. All small grain and ryegrass recommendations are developed by a team of researchers and Extension Specialists from Georgia, Florida, and Alabama. This team evaluates data from the Statewide Variety Test from the previous three years to identify the highest yielding, most consistent varieties for each local region and statewide. We have summarized these briefly below and on our website, but the full report is available through the Statewide Variety Testing website.

Recommended Varieties for 2023-2024

Rye: Kelly Grazer III, Swift, and Wrens Abruzzi

Bates RS4, Elbon, and FL 401 have performed well in the past, but have not been recently evaluated. No varieties have been recently tested in Limestone Valley.
† Recommended varieties have consistently demonstrated above-average yields in UGA variety trials. Other varieties may provide satisfactory yields but were either not consistently above average or were not submitted to the Statewide Variety Trial program.
M = Mountains; P = Piedmont; C = Coastal Plain; No note indicates the variety is recommended statewide.
https://georgiaforages.caes.uga.edu/species-and-varieties/cool-season/rye.html

Triticale: TriCal 21T01(C)⁎, TriCal Hybrid Flex, and TriCal Surge

Trical Merlin Max has performed well in the past, but not been recently evaluated. Trical 342 was previously recommended but performed below average in 2022-23 evaluations.
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⁎May not be available in 2023.
M = Mountains; P = Piedmont; C = Coastal Plain; No note indicates the variety is recommended statewide.
https://georgiaforages.caes.uga.edu/species-and-varieties/cool-season/triticale.html

Wheat: AGS 2024, AGS 4043 (C), Johnson (P), and SSI30-06 (P)

Dyna-Gro Plantation, AGS 3026, ⁎GrazeAll, ⁎Pioneer 26R10 and ⁎Pioneer 26R41 have performed well in the past but has not been recently evaluated. No varieties have been recently tested in Limestone Valley.
†Recommended varieties have consistently demonstrated above average yields in UGA variety trials. Other varieties may provide satisfactory yields but were either not consistently above average or were not submitted to the Statewide Variety Trial program.
M = Mountains; P = Piedmont; C = Coastal Plain; No note indicates the variety is recommended statewide.
https://georgiaforages.caes.uga.edu/species-and-varieties/cool-season/wheat.html

Recommended Varieties for 2023-2024

Ryegrass:

Early Varieties: Centurion, Diamond T (C, P), Double Diamond (C), Earlyploid, Flying A, Grits, ME-4, ME-94 (P, M), Nelson (C), Prine (C), RM4L, TAMTBO (C, P), Triangle T (C, P), Winterhawk, and WMWL-2 (P, M).
Late Varieties: Diamond T (P, L), Double Diamond (P), Earlyploid (C), Flying A, Grits, ME-4, ME-94 (P, M), Prine (C, P), Ranahan (C, P), RM4L (P), TAMTBO, Triangle T (P), Winterhawk (P,M), WMWL (P, M), and WMWL-2 (M).
Season-Long: Centurion, Diamond T (P, M), Double Diamond (C), Earlyploid (C, P), Flying A, Grits, ME-4, ME-94 (P, M), Nelson (C), Prine (C, P), Ranahan (P), RM4L (P), TAMTBO (C), Triangle T (C, P), Winterhawk (C), and WMWL (M), and WMWL-2 (M).
† Annual ryegrass variety recommendations are broken down into early and late producing traits. Recommended varieties have consistently demonstrated above average yields in UGA variety trials. Other varieties may provide satisfactory yields but were either not consistently above average or were not submitted to the Statewide Variety Trial program.
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https://georgiaforages.caes.uga.edu/species-and-varieties/cool-season/annual-ryegrass.html

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