



BIRDSFOOT TREFOIL

Lotus corniculatus

Purpose & Fit

Birdsfoot trefoil can be grazed, cut for hay, or used for silage. It will thrive in areas that alfalfa and other forage legumes cannot grow due to soil acidity and moisture. Soils with low pH, poor drainage, poor native fertility, or fragipans prone to heaving are suitable locations for planting birdsfoot trefoil. Birdsfoot trefoil can reseed itself and does not cause bloat in animals.

Total digestible nutrients will be greater than alfalfa depending on the growth stage, and trefoil will not lose quality with maturity as fast as alfalfa.

Growth Pattern

A perennial legume, Birdsfoot trefoil, is taprooted with many lateral roots that make plants less prone to heaving. Lateral roots occur in the top two feet of the soil profile with the entire root system (including the taproot) going as deep as four feet.

Climate & Soil

Tolerant to wet, acidic soil, Birdsfoot trefoil also has some drought and salinity tolerance, although shade tolerance is low. Birdsfoot Trefoil can also perform well in arid areas.

Planting

Shallow plowing or thorough discing is needed to create a good, firm seedbed several weeks ahead of planting. Weed control is essential during establishment and utilizing a cultipacker with a pre-plant incorporated herbicide is recommended. Plant with slow-growing companion grasses in early spring or late summer.

Grazing

Leave birdsfoot trefoil ungrazed from early autumn until the first frosts to accumulate root reserves and provide good quality forage during late autumn. Rotationally graze often to encourage reseeding and spreading from passage through animals.

Quick Data

Seeds/LB:
375,000 - 500,000

Optimum Growth Range:
68°F - 86°F

Seeding Depth:
0.25" - 0.50" Depth

Min Time To Emergence:
7 days

Planting Rate (Monoculture):
8 Lb/A - 10 Lb/A

Tons of Dry Matter an Acre:
6 - 17