

Red Fescue

Winter hardy and early growing, useful on hill grazing pastures. Graze tightly to maintain leafiness and quality.

Meadow fescue

Leafy, nutritious, hardy, persistent and useful in lower fertility conditions, for example in mixture with Timothy and white clover.

Cocksfoot

Early heading, drought tolerant, high yielding and deep rooting but low palatability even in 'improved' varieties. Use only for grazing on very dry soil sites.

Herbs

Valued for rooting depth, improving soil structure, minerals, anti parasite factors and bio diversity.

Examples: chicory, salad burnet, plantain, birdsfoot trefoil, yarrow and sheeps parsley.

CLOVERS

White Clover

Grows on a network of creeping stolons. There are a range of varieties classified by 'leaf size':

Small: persistent under close, sheep grazing, Medium: for cattle or rotational grazing;

Large: for longer grazing intervals or silage, not tolerant of close or frequent grazing.

Long term breeding programmes have produced newer more adaptable varieties. Use in grazing and graze & cut leys with ryegrasses, timothy and fescues. Base variety selection on requirements for winter hardiness, spring growth, ground cover, disease resistance and yield.

Red clover

Single growing point and less persistent than white clover so avoid close winter grazing. High yield and quality feed. It is quick to establish, has high first year growth and is suited to silage. Care with bloat when grazing and avoid grazing ewes during, and six weeks either side of tugging. Use resistant varieties and rotation (5yr.) to avoid soil borne disease (Sclerotinia) and stem eelworm. Use in short 2-4year leys.

GRASSLAND LEYS

Grasses and clovers grown in mixtures selected for the 'job' with complementary types.

Requirement	Suitable Mixtures	Systems
Specialist early season growth	Forage rye or Italian ryegrass	Dairy cows, early lambing ewes in a rotation or oversown into ley
Short term ley (1-3 yrs) Quality silage	Red clover with Italian and or Hybrid ryegrasses	Silage or early grazing and part of arable or cropping rotation
Medium term ley Silage and grazing	Perennial ryegrass & white clover (4-7yrs) Perennial ryegrass & red & white clover (5-7yrs)	Sheep /beef/ dairy cow In rotation or For some high yield and quality silage, dairy /beef or mixed - avoid expense of reseed
Long term ley Grazing and silage	Perennial ryegrass white clover and other grasses Persistent varieties thrive in poorer conditions	Upland or extensive sheep and beef.

CEREALS - What is the priority - seed, grain, crimped grain, arable silage, or a cover crop?

Competitiveness is useful for weed control but can disadvantage undersown grass/clover leys. Competitiveness increases: wheat-> barley -> triticale-> oats.

Wheat has highest yield potential but needs good fertility. Usually first cereal after the legume ley.

Barley is a good second cereal, good for undersowing.

Triticale good second cereal, disease resistant, good feed quality, tolerant of low fertility. Winter var. only.

Oats, tolerant of low fertility, and low pH. Susceptible to cereal cyst nematode. Feed quality improved in new varieties.

Use NIAB for variety selection. Look for disease resistance, competitiveness/straw length, description, regional results and organic trials.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Website: www.grassdevcentre.co.uk

Reading: NIAB recommended lists of grasses and herbage legumes 2001.