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### G77-357 Selecting Alfalfa Varieties for Nebraska (Revised December 1994)

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(Revised December 1994)

## Selecting Alfalfa Varieties for Nebraska

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Yield potential, pest resistance and seed price all should be considered in selecting alfalfa varieties in Nebraska. This NebGuide discusses them.

The most important variety decision made on many farms and ranches is the selection of alfalfa varieties. The choice of alfalfa variety affects production for three to 10 or more years, whereas varieties of annual crops can be changed every year.

Many alfalfa varieties are available from private and public plant breeders. Over the years, yield trials conducted at widely distributed Nebraska locations have tested most varieties presently marketed in the state.

The originator or distributor of each variety is listed in *Table I* as a source of seed information. Public varieties are usually available in certified seed channels. Some varieties may be difficult to obtain due to low seed supply or limited distribution. Purchase seed only of certified quality to assure genetic identity of the variety. Common seed should not be planted for forage production.

Select alfalfa varieties according to three criteria:

1. Yield potential
2. Pest resistance
3. Seed price

Use *Table I* to identify high yield varieties. Then select from this list those varieties with desirable pest resistance. Finally, compare seed price.

### Fall Dormancy

Low dormancy ratings indicate varieties have slower regrowth after harvest and grow slowly in the fall. Slow fall growth has been considered desirable for developing winter hardiness, but some recently released varieties have high winterhardiness and higher dormancy ratings (faster fall growth).

### Resistance to Disease

**Bacterial wilt.** Historically, this has been the primary disease of alfalfa in Nebraska. All varieties in this NebGuide have sufficient bacterial wilt resistance for most long-term stands. There are different degrees of resistance within varieties classified as bacterial wilt resistant.

**Anthracnose.** Anthracnose is a fungal disease often occurring in alfalfa under irrigation or high moisture conditions. Varieties with anthracnose resistance should be selected.

**Phytophthora root rot.** Phytophthora root rot is a serious disease, especially on poorly drained soils. It can make stand establishment difficult and often kills young seedlings during wet seasons. It also can reduce the productivity and longevity of established stands.

**Other diseases.** Common leafspot, lepto leafspot and blackstem are foliar diseases that cause leaf losses and reduce both total alfalfa yield and quality. Fusarium wilt and verticillium wilt are diseases that have not caused severe problems in Nebraska.

Varieties listed in *Table I* have been developed with resistance to some of these diseases. Select varieties that have resistance to anthracnose, phytophthora root rot and bacterial wilt.

### Resistance to Insects

Insects can cause losses in hay yield and quality, stand establishment and persistence. Several varieties have low to moderate resistance or tolerance to potato leafhopper yellowing. Varieties with high levels of resistance to pea aphids or spotted alfalfa aphids, or both, are available.

### Alfalfa Yields

Varieties that have been tested since 1990 for two or more years at locations in Nebraska and marketed in the state are shown in *Table I*. Data collected from these varieties since 1963 are included in the table. Yield comparisons are relative to production from the check varieties Dawson and Vernal included in the same tests. A yield of 115 percent indicates that the variety produced 15 percent more yield than the average yield of Dawson and Vernal. Each station year represents data from one location during one year. Greater confidence can be placed in data from four or more station years. Small yield differences (two or three percent) may be due to natural variation, especially for varieties tested three station years or less.

The ratings of varieties tested only two years often change substantially with additional testing.





| Originator or Distributor                | Address                          | City, State, Zip          | Phone #      |
|--|----------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------|
| America's Alfalfa <sup>3</sup>           | P.O. Box 722, 126 North Tenth    | Broken Bow, NE 68822      | 308-872-6826 |
| Arrow Seed Co. <sup>3</sup>              | P.O. Box 88, Rt. 2               | Tekamah, NE 68061         | 800-752-6574 |
| Horizon Seeds <sup>3</sup>               | P.O. Box 516, 70927 Hwy. 26      | Morrill, NE 69358         | 800-445-5454 |
| Jirdon Agri Chemicals <sup>3</sup>       | 133 West Park St.                | West Point, NE 68788      | 402-372-5588 |
| Kaup Seed & Fertilizer <sup>3</sup>      | P.O. Box 789, East Hwy. 30       | Grand Island, NE 68802    | 800-776-4776 |
| AgniPro Seeds                            | P.O. Box 4741                    | Syracuse, NY 13221        | 208-466-9218 |
| Agway, Inc.                              | 1917 E. Fargo                    | Nampa, ID 83687           | 800-624-8904 |
| Allied Seed Cooperative                  | 7000 Portage Rd.                 | Kalamazoo, MI 49001       | 616-385-6633 |
| Asgrow Seed Co.                          | P.O. Box 300                     | Camp Point, IL 62320      | 217-593-7707 |
| Bio-Plant Research                       | P.O. Box 367                     | Westfield, IN 46074       | 317-896-5551 |
| Callahan Seeds                           | P.O. 405, Hwy. 34 west           | Seward, NE 68434          | 800-346-4853 |
| Cargill Hybrid Seeds                     | P.O. Box 1377                    | Dodge City, KS 67801      | 800-444-4137 |
| Casterline & Sons Seed, Inc.             | 2827 8th Ave. S.                 | Fort Dodge, IA 50501      | 800-369-3060 |
| Cenex/Land'O'Lakes                       | P.O. Box 18300                   | Greensboro, NC 27419-8300 | 800-447-2391 |
| Ciba Seeds                               | P.O. Box 978                     | Pekin, IL 61554           | 309-382-3111 |
| ConAgra                                  | P.O. Box 160                     | Momence, IL 60954         | 815-472-2433 |
| Custom Farm Seed                         | P.O. Box 958                     | West Bend, WI 53059       | 800-236-0163 |
| Dairyland Seed Co. <sup>4</sup>          | 3100 Sycamore Rd.                | Dekalb, IL 60115          | 815-756-7333 |
| Dekalb Genetics                          | Rt. 1 Box 424A                   | Jersey Shore, PA 17740    | 717-753-3210 |
| Dobblers                                 | 2197 W. Parallel Rd.             | Garden City, KS 67846     | 800-597-2998 |
| Drussel Seed & Supply                    | Rt. 1 Box 18                     | Nickerson, NE 68044       | 800-279-4353 |
| Fontanelle Hybrids                       | 1665 Burroughs Rd.               | Adrian, OR 97901          | 800-843-0390 |
| Geertson Seed Farms                      | P.O. Box 373                     | Hill City, KS 67642       | 913-674-2062 |
| Germain's, Inc.                          | 100 J.C. Robinson Blvd.          | Waterloo, NE 68069        | 800-228-9906 |
| Golden Harvest/J.C. Robinson             | 9915 W. M-21                     | Ovid, MI 48866            | 800-257-7333 |
| Great Lakes Hybrids, Inc.                | 3624 Kildaire Farm Road          | Apex, NC 27502-8836       | 800-874-7945 |
| Great Plains Research Co.                | 309 North Main                   | Springfield, MO 65805     | 800-641-4206 |
| Green Seed Co.                           | Rt. 1, Box 188                   | Prophetstown, IL 61277    | 815-537-5388 |
| Gutwein Seed (Larry DeNeve)              | P.O. Box 240, 1415 Ave. B        | Scottsbluff, NE 69361     | 308-632-2315 |
| Hergert Milling <sup>4</sup>             | Rt. 2, Box 126                   | Hooper, NE 68031          | 800-245-4631 |
| Hoegemeyer Hybrids                       | West Hwy. 6 & 34, P.O. Box 530   | Holdrege, NE 68949        | 308-995-4465 |
| Holdrege Seed & Farm Supply <sup>4</sup> | P.O. Box 2962                    | Shawnee Mission, KS 66201 | 913-384-4940 |
| IAM                                      | 6945 Vista Dr.                   | West DesMoines, IA 50266  | 800-348-2742 |
| ICI Seeds                                | P.O. Box 338, 1215 Prairie Pkwy  | West Fargo, ND 58078      | 800-437-4120 |
| Interstate/Payco                         | 335 S. High St.                  | Randolph, WI 53957        | 800-242-1855 |
| Jung Farms, Inc.                         | 5506 State Rd. 19                | Waunakee, WI 53597-0278   | 800-383-3276 |
| Kaltenberg Seed Farms                    | P.O. Box 209                     | Olivia, MN 56277-0209     | 800-325-5759 |
| Keltgen Seed                             | 925 Dexter, P.O. Box 216         | Prescott, WI 54021        | 800-637-2887 |
| L. Herried Seed                          | P.O. Box 187                     | La Crosse, WI 54601       | 800-658-9428 |
| La Crosse Seed Corp.                     | P.O. Box 637                     | Marshalltown, IA 50158    | 800-798-2676 |
| Lynks Seeds                              | 720 St. Croix St.                | Prescott, WI 54021        | 800-321-2867 |
| Mycogen Plant Sciences                   | Box 4408                         | Lincoln, NE 68504         | 402-467-2517 |
| NC+ Hybrids                              | P.O. Box 959                     | Minneapolis, MN 55440     | 800-445-0956 |
| Northrup King Co.                        | 2055 Ironwood Ct., Box 308       | Ames, IA 50010            | 800-247-3967 |
| PGI/MBS                                  | P.O. Box 346                     | Savage, MN 55378          | 800-328-5898 |
| Peterson Seed Co., Inc.                  | 210 Gateway North, P.O. Box 5307 | Lincoln, NE 68505         | 402-467-5458 |
| Pioneer Hi-Bred Intl., Inc.              | Rt. #1, Box C                    | Battle Creek, NE 68715    | 402-675-2975 |
| Producers Hybrids                        | Box 1393                         | St. Joseph, MO 64502      | 800-821-7666 |
| Research Seeds                           | 2019 Riverside                   | Norfolk, NE 68701         | 800-642-6077 |
| The Sexauer Co.                          | 803 W. Racine St.                | Jefferson, WI 53549       | 800-284-1080 |
| Spangler Bros. Seed Co.                  | P.O. Box 68, 1118 N. 57          | Aurora, NE 68818          | 800-676-7759 |
| Stauffer Seeds                           | 2225 Laredo Trail                | Adel, IA 50003            | 800-362-2510 |
| Stine Seed Co.                           | P.O. Box 27322                   | Omaha, NE 68127           | 402-331-4800 |
| United Seeds <sup>4</sup>                | P.O. Box 1017                    | Lamar, CO 81052           | 800-456-0169 |
| WILBUR-ELLIS COMPANY                     | P.O. Box 391, 1408 Hwy. 44 East  | Harlen, IA 51537          | 800-747-1200 |
| Wilson Seeds Inc.                        | 8701 Hwy. 14                     | Evansville, WI 53536      | 608-882-4100 |
| W-L Research, Inc.                       | P.O. Box 246                     | Atkinson, IL 61235        | 309-936-7833 |

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Kenneth R. Bolen, Director of Cooperative Extension, University of Nebraska, Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

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