SMITH SEED SERVICES

# Snippets

May 2026

## Stressed Out

That's an accurate description of many Southeast pastures and lawns, due to ongoing drought conditions. As Lisa Baxter, forage specialist with the University of Georgia Extension, recently stated in the *Southeast FarmPress*, the problem actually began last summer. Extreme high temperatures in July/August 2025, combined with prolonged drought, prevented warm-season grasses from having the resources they needed to grow vigorously during their prime season. They entered fall and winter dormancy with very limited reserves. Now, they begin their 2026 growing season under moderate to severe drought. Nutrient access is hampered. Fertilizer application may be ineffective if rains don't come soon. Regardless, with the high price of fertilizer, application may be avoided altogether.

Compounding the problem, winter annuals either weren't planted or produced limited yields due to the drought, followed by extreme cold events and minimal spring moisture. Hay is both expensive and in short supply, as livestock producers are feeding hay during a period when they would normally have multiple grazing options.

What does this mean for summer and fall cool-season species usage? At minimum, it indicates a likely need for pasture renovation, grazing and hay production, and potential lawn repair. While we are still months from fall planting, these factors will likely play into purchasing and pricing decisions.

## Crop Notes

Willamette Valley seed crops continue to progress smoothly towards harvest. Thanks to good fall establishment and generally successful weed control, fields are relatively clean and maturing at a steady pace. Spring-planted crops—including radish, orchardgrass, and tall fescue—have benefited from early rains that supported healthy early establishment.

With short-term forecasts indicating minimal moisture and the long-term outlook calling for a hot, dry spring and summer, all crops would benefit from a few more inches of water to carry them to the finish line.

## Shifting Gears—Up or Down?

In general, wholesale movement of cool-season seed has been very strong this spring. As we flip the calendar to May and wrap up spring sales, we all begin turning our attention to harvest, new crop availability, pricing, and projected fall needs. From a production standpoint, as mentioned above, we should be able to meet most needs (excluding orchardgrass!) with little difficulty—at least regarding quantity.

Pricing may be another story. Will we see prices go up, go down, or stay the same? We know on-farm costs are higher, with fuel and fertilizer being significant drivers. These costs push Oregon seed producers toward higher prices. But the flip side may push consumer-farmers in the opposite direction—both in terms of consumption and their willingness to absorb price increases. Not only are end-users, specifically farmers, paying more for their own fuel and fertilizer, but any seed or other goods they receive cost more to transport. Ideally, oil prices will fall, but we just don't know.