

News Column

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WHEAT VARIETIES

I suppose it's my western Kansas upbringing that keeps me focused on wheat production, even as wheat acres continue to decline in this half of the state. It's certainly not profitability that keeps me interested. Instead, it has to be a mentality that I'm just stuck with.

Like many of you here, we didn't plant a single acre of wheat on our Phillips County farm last fall. Dad left last year's wheat ground fallow to plant to corn in the spring, and planted either corn or soybeans on last year's corn ground. It wouldn't always seem like a good idea, but with low wheat prices, we didn't think it would take many beans to beat wheat.

Long-term, I prefer a systems approach where we maintain a crop rotation, even if one of the crops in the rotation isn't profitable. Overall, I think we'll be ahead with a good rotation. The wheat may be a zero for profitability, but the other crops will be better with wheat in the rotation. Therefore, we will plant our soybean acres back to wheat after bean harvest this fall.

Here in Riley County WB-Grainfield, WB-Cedar, and SY Monument are among my favorite wheat varieties. Grainfield has done well in our plots, even though the experts would place it a little farther west for its ideal adaptation area. It is a medium-tall variety with medium to late maturity, and it has good straw strength and good drought tolerance.

Cedar, is a medium-short, early maturing variety. Cedar has been around awhile, and like older varieties tend to do, it has lost some disease resistance. Yet, it has still been a top yielding variety for many producers. We are advised to avoid planting Cedar if the pH is below 5.2, but

that shouldn't affect many Riley County Fields.

Monument is a good choice following soybeans. Monument's yields have been very good for the last three years, making it a top choice for many producers. The last three years have all been cool and moist in May and June, favoring later maturing varieties like Monument. It may not do as well when we have a hot, dry spring. However, I'd still throw it in my blend. I would avoid planting it on really good bottom ground though, due to its' questionable straw strength.

Another good variety with questionable straw strength is 1863. You might plant 1863 behind soybeans because the later planting date can help reduce plant height, thus reducing lodging potential. Another reason to plant it behind soybeans is because of its above average tillering ability. The stand will thicken up faster than some other varieties.

WB-4458 is another variety that Romulo Lollato, KSU Wheat Specialist, recommends for north-central Kansas. It is a medium-early variety, with medium height and exceptional straw strength. One thing to remember with WB-4458 is that it has large kernels, so you will need to adjust your planting rate to avoid low stand counts.

The final variety I will mention is Zenda, and this is one you need to try. Zenda is a new K-State variety that has Everest in its pedigree. Producers who liked Everest should also be successful with Zenda.

Zenda is the variety you want to plant when following corn due to its head scab resistance. It is a medium-early, medium height variety that has moderate resistance to stem, stripe, and leaf rust. It has excellent straw strength and has an excellent yield record in performance trials.

We are fortunate to have many good wheat varieties that are well adapted to our area.

There are at least five more good varieties that I haven't mentioned. If your favorite isn't on my list, just stay tuned. It might be there next year.

If you have questions, you can reach me at the Riley County Extension Office at 785/537-6350. Or, you can send e-mail to gmclure@ksu.edu.

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