Is it Too Late to Dig Miscanthus for Spring Planting?

Emily A. Heaton
Iowa State University, heaton@iastate.edu

Nicholas N. Boersma
Iowa State University, nboersma@iastate.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/cropnews

Part of the Agricultural Science Commons, Agriculture Commons, and the Agronomy and Crop Sciences Commons

Recommended Citation
http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/cropnews/176

The Iowa State University Digital Repository provides access to Integrated Crop Management News for historical purposes only. Users are hereby notified that the content may be inaccurate, out of date, incomplete and/or may not meet the needs and requirements of the user. Users should make their own assessment of the information and whether it is suitable for their intended purpose. For current information on integrated crop management from Iowa State University Extension and Outreach, please visit https://crops.extension.iastate.edu/.
Is it Too Late to Dig Miscanthus for Spring Planting?

Abstract
Giant Miscanthus (Miscanthus × giganteus) is a perennial warm-season grass used for bioenergy, and is being planted on thousands of acres in Missouri and Arkansas this spring. Given the warm spring, and the high level of interest in Miscanthus this year, we have been getting lots of questions around propagation and planting.

Keywords
Agronomy

Disciplines
Agricultural Science | Agriculture | Agronomy and Crop Sciences

This article is available at Iowa State University Digital Repository: http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/cropnews/176
Is it Too Late to Dig Miscanthus for Spring Planting?

By Emily Heaton and Nicholas Boersma, Department of Agronomy

Giant Miscanthus (Miscanthus × giganteus) is a perennial warm-season grass used for bioenergy, and is being planted on thousands of acres in Missouri and Arkansas this spring. Given the warm spring, and the high level of interest in Miscanthus this year, we have been getting lots of questions around propagation and planting.

A sterile hybrid, Giant Miscanthus is most commonly planted from rhizome pieces when the soil temperatures have reached 50 F. Most farmers get their rhizomes from a commercial supplier, but those people who just want to play around with the new crop have been planting small plots that they can then dig up and propagate into larger stands at their leisure. Here are some things to consider if you are propagating and/or planting rhizomes this spring.

1. If you want to dig up rhizomes from an established stand, it is best to do this while the stand is dormant, that is, after it has died back in the fall and before it emerges in the spring.

2. If you are not replanting immediately, dig and separate the rhizomes, then keep them cool (approximately 40 F), making sure they don’t dry out.

3. If your Miscanthus has already emerged, you can still dig, but if you have expanded leaves, it is getting too late. Once the shoots get over 10 inches tall on average, you will start losing plants, and it is best to wait until the following year to dig. A rule of thumb might be that for every inch the stand is over 8 inches, you will lose 5 percent of the potential plants.

4. Plant rhizomes in a weed-free row (can use strip tillage), making sure that all of the rhizome is covered, but not too deep; at least part of it should be within 2 inches of the soil surface.

5. Good weed control is essential at establishment. Planting on a grid will allow for cultivation after the Miscanthus has emerged. Harness and Harness Xtra are labeled for use on Miscanthus for pre-emergent weed control.

6. Rhizomes can take a while to emerge, anywhere from three days to three weeks, typically, with some not emerging until late in the season. This is frustrating, but resist the urge to dig anything up or replant until three weeks, warm temperatures and some good rain have had a chance to work.
Shoots of Giant Miscanthus emerging from a clump of rhizomes in a recently tilled field near Ames, Iowa. Most shoots are still in the whorl, with only a few small emerged leaves. Once more leaves have unrolled, this field should not be divided this year.

Emily Heaton is an Iowa State University agronomy professor with extension responsibilities in biomass production. She can be contacted by emailing heaton@iastate.edu or calling 515-294-1310. Nicholas Boersma is a research associate in the agronomy department. He can be contacted at nboersma@iastate.edu or calling 515-851-1024.

This article was published originally on 4/11/2012. The information contained within the article may or may not be up to date depending on when you are accessing the information.

Links to this material are strongly encouraged. This article may be republished without further permission if it is published as written and includes credit to the author, Integrated Crop Management News and Iowa State University Extension. Prior permission from the author is required if this article is republished in any other manner.