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Michigan State University Extension Service  
L.O. Copeland, R.D. Freed, R.H. Leep, and D. Wolfe, Crop and Soil Sciences  
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# Barley Variety Performance in Michigan

L. O. Copeland, R. D. Freed, R. H. Leep,  
and D. Wolfe,

Dept. of Crop and Soil Science

In recent years, barley has become an attractive alternative feed grain for livestock, particularly dairy and beef cattle. Its reputation for low production costs is particularly attractive in times of economic adversity for farmers, and like wheat, barley responds well to good management.

## Role of Barley in Michigan

In 1985, about 40,000 acres were devoted to barley production in Michigan. This was double the all-time low of 20,000 acres in 1978, but far below the all-time record of 303,000 acres in 1932. By far the greatest proportion planted (95 to 98 percent) is spring barley, most (about 80 percent) of which is intended for malting purposes. To qualify for malting, the barley must be bright and unweathered, practically free of other grains and foreign material, contain little or no broken, skinned, or otherwise damaged kernels, and meet other appropriate quality standards.

Aside from its use for malting, barley is a high quality feed grain and is a viable alternative or supplement to corn in many situations. Some of its features include:

- Its feeding value is comparable (90 percent) to that of corn, with a higher protein content and lower total energy supply.
- Good barley yields can be produced with substantially less costs in labor, equipment, and chemicals.
- Its range of adaptation to northern latitudes is much greater than that of corn; thus good yields of barley can be produced in latitudes where corn is not profitable.
- Barley is usually harvested in July when weather conditions are favorable, compared to November or December when most corn is harvested. This also corresponds to greater availability of labor and equipment. Therefore, production of barley offers the opportunity of better utilization of both time and equipment.

Table 1. Performance and characteristics of spring barley varieties tested in Tuscola, Huron, and Ingham counties from 1979 to 1985.

Variety	Origin	No. of tests	Test Yield (bu/acre)	Weight (lb/bu)	Height (in.)	Heading Date	Use
Morex	Minnesota	18	87.6	50.0	35	6/13	Malting/feed
Robust	Minnesota	18	89.9	50.8	34	6/13	Malting/feed
Larker	N. Dakota	17	85.3	50.4	35	6/13	Malting/feed
Bowers	Michigan	23	92.2	49.9	34	6/17	Feed
Leger	Canada	6	94.0	51.6	38	6/17	Feed

Table 2. Yield of spring barley varieties from performance trials in 1985.<sup>1</sup>

County:	Presque Isle	Missaukee	Isabella		Tuscola	
Variety			Seeding rate 2 bu/acre	Seeding rate 3 bu/acre		Mean of all locations
Hazen	91.0	103.6	101.4	106.5	—	100.8
Bowers	90.0	89.2	112.6	110.4	80.3	96.5
Leger	76.3	93.8	98.1	110.2	76.7	91.1
Robust	82.5	106.3	75.1	81.6	75.3	84.2
Morex	83.6	—	88.6	92.6	76.4	85.3

<sup>1</sup>Seeding rates were 2 bu/acre unless otherwise specified.

## Spring vs. Winter Barley

Although most Michigan barley is the spring type, there has always been an interest in winter barley. The two types are generally comparable in yield potential, but winter barley matures faster and generally can be harvested one to two weeks earlier than spring seeded types. Consequently, planting some winter barley may help to spread out use of labor and equipment.

Winter barley is not as winter hardy as wheat, so it should be planted only in southern Michigan where winter survival is assured. This generally corresponds to areas comparable to the Saginaw Valley region. Some varieties have greater tolerance to colder temperatures than others, so growers on the northern fringe of this area should select more tolerant varieties.

Although there is no basic relationship between the type (spring or winter) of barley and its use as feed or malting, all of the current malting varieties are spring seeded types, while feed varieties represent both spring and winter types.

## Variety Selection

Growers should select varieties that will meet their purposes and produce the best in their geographic location. Excellent varieties of both spring and fall seeded types are available for Michigan growers. These represent feed and malting types from both public and private sources. Tables 1 to 5 show the characteristics and performance of varieties in several locations in Michigan. Although they vary somewhat in characteristics and productivity, all are considered acceptable for Michigan's climate.

Table 3. Characteristics of barley varieties tested at several locations in the Upper Peninsula (1979 to 1985).

Variety	Height (in.)	Heading Date	Lodging Index*	Test Weight (lb/bu)	—Disease Resistance**—		
					Loose Smut	Spot Blotch	Mildew
Morex	29	6/25	1.5	46.5	R	MR	+
Bowers	33	6/27	2.2	45.2	S	MR	R
Bonanza	40	6/26	2.6	45.2	R	MS	S
Larker	36	6/26	2.7	46.7	S	S	MS
Leger	37	6/27	1.8	46.5	R	S	MR
Robust	30	6/29	0.6	46.2	R	+	+
Hazen	32	6/26	0.3	46.3	R	+	+

\*Belgium Lodging Rating System:  $A \times B \times .2 = \text{Lodging Index}$   
 A = Area surface lodging percent  
 B = Intensity of Lodging (1 = upright; 5 = flat)

\*\*R = Resistant  
 S = Susceptible  
 M = Moderately  
 + = No data

Table 4. Yield (bu/acre) of barley varieties tested at several locations in the Upper Peninsula (1979 to 1985).

Variety	Alger		Menominee		Other		Average	
	Yield	No. of Tests	Yield	No. of Tests	Yield	No. of Tests	Yield	No. of Tests
Morex	63	(3)	80	(4)	81	(3)	75.4	(10)
Bowers	58	(6)	80	(6)	82	(3)	75.0	(15)
Bonanza	91	(2)	84	(3)	100	(1)	89.0	(6)
Larker	69	(4)	67	(3)	—	—	64.0	(7)
Leger	55	(3)	76	(2)	85	(2)	70.0	(7)
Robust	53	(2)	73	(2)	76	(2)	67.0	(6)
Hazen	51	(1)	83	(1)	86	(1)	73.0	(3)

Table 5. Yield and test weight of winter varieties in Ingham county (1983).

Variety	Height (in.)	Yield (bu/acre)	Test Weight (lb/bu)
OAC Halton	46	96	51.7
Odin	51	101	52.2
Lakeland	46	98	52.2
OH 77-19	43	107	51.9
Post	45	83	50.1
LSD-0.05	4	17	2.0



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