

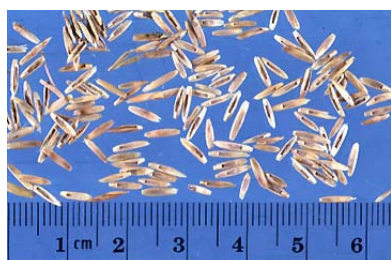


Perennial Ryegrass



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Common perennial ryegrass can last more than one season in the warmer climates. Ryegrass germinates quickly, and can be used as a temporary ground cover while the slower growing bluegrass plants take hold. It can also be used to overseed bermudagrass to keep the lawn and turf green all year. Ryegrass is best adapted to moist, cool environments where temperatures are not extreme in the winter or summer. In California, inland areas are the best adaptation for ryegrass. In the transition zone, perennial ryegrass may provide a permanent turfgrass.



Overseeding warm season grasses for winter green

In warm climates, perennial ryegrass is used as a temporary "winter green" grass for overseeding established warm season grasses, especially zoysia and bermuda, in early fall. Planted in early fall, it maintains a bright green lawn through winter.

By summer the perennial rye usually has died in the heat and the permanent grass is green again. In the milder regions it is not uncommon to have a dual stand of perennial ryegrass and a warm-season turfgrass base which could be Zoysiagrass and Bermudagrass.

To help perennial ryegrass seed planted into a warm-season lawn germinate well, mow the dormant warm-season grass just before you sow ryegrass, and gather up the clippings. Then rake over the area to score the soil's surface. Like all grass seeds, perennial ryegrass will not germinate unless the seed is in direct contact with moist soil after mowing.

Time to Overseed Bermudagrass-Using Perennial Ryegrass

It's fall and that means it's time to overseed bermudagrass in the South and Southwest. The main reason for overseeding is to provide your clients with attractive, green grass during the winter months. The process of overseeding is fairly straightforward. There can be problems encountered, like inconsistent germination or growth, too much required maintenance, or a less-than-smooth transition back to bermuda come spring. Here's a look at the latest approaches to the age-old practice of overseeding, from the cool-season grass you select to the most effective cultural methods applied today.

Perennial Ryegrass

Since the 1980's and 90's the popularity of perennial ryegrasses as the single species for overseeding has soared. Like annual rye, perennial rye delivers fast establishment, but it also offers a fine leaf texture and overall aesthetic appeal, competitiveness, low maintenance and tolerance of close mowing. To meet the demand, seed breeders keep introducing even better varieties that offer superior turf quality, deeper green color, quicker establishment, wear and cold tolerance, better mowing qualities, and strong disease and pest resistance.

Perennial rye transitions very well when the springtime temperatures rise because it has a poor heat tolerance. So it dies back quickly and allows the bermudagrass to take over. Seed companies are also offering more perennial ryes with improved salt tolerance. Desert areas of the Southwest, well water is often used for irrigation. These perennial ryes could be in demand in the future.

Quality

For a listing of the best and brightest of these varieties, take a look at the latest National Turfgrass Evaluation Program (NTEP) results at the www.ntep.com.

The results from the (NTEP) tests are a great tool that a landscape contractor can use to determine what kind of quality and which perennial rye would be suitable for the job.

Always look and read the label on the grass seed package. Look for any kind of annual rye grass seed in the bag. Annual ryegrass will compromise the quality of the grass. Check for the variety of the ryegrass. If VNS is listed this means 'variety not stated' and could be an old variety not suitable for the job.

With all the time and effort it takes to prepare, plant, and establish turfgrass, you should make sure you know what you are planting and that you get the results that you desire. The bottom line is buy quality seed, read the label and select good quality.



Planting

Once you've selected quality seed, the next step is to plan for planting. As you may already know, sowing the seed too early can cause germinating ryegrass to compete with still-flourishing bermudagrass, and thus establish poorly. If overseeded too late the ryegrass may not have time to establish and grow before colder temperatures and shorter days arrive. In California and Arizona, the best time to overseed is roughly from mid-October to mid-November.

Start cutting the lawns down, cut the water in half, but not completely off. This lessens the stress on bermuda.”

Important to-do's

The following are procedures critical during the process of overseeding:

- Don't fertilize four to six weeks before overseeding.
- Seed uniformly. Use a rate of 350 – 450 lb/acre (8-10 lb/1000 sq. ft.) of seed.
- Top dress with 1/8 - 1/4 "sand.
- Water heavily (.25" – 0.5") initially and then light watering two to four times daily thereafter to keep the seedbed moist. As the turf matures, reduce the number of water cycles.
- Two weeks after overseeding, when the grass is about two inches, mow down to 1½ inches.

