



# ALBERT LEA SEED

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## Italian Ryegrass (*Lolium multiflorum*)

### Description

Italian ryegrass is a fast-growing biennial ryegrass considered an “annual” in the upper Midwest. Italian ryegrass provides excellent quality forage, depending on climate and available moisture. Due to its quick re-growth, very early development in spring, and a prolonged growing period in the fall, this species usually has greater overall productivity than other cool season grasses. When planted in the spring, Italian ryegrass will usually not go to seed in the seeding year which results in high quality forage production without the low quality stems and seed heads. Italian ryegrass can be utilized as a cover crop for new alfalfa seedings and row crops. Crops that follow a stand of Italian ryegrass frequently show higher yields, compared to other green manure crops. In addition, Italian ryegrass is a perfect rotation crop for plow down or emergency feed and useful for extending a grass or alfalfa stand's longevity. Because ryegrasses establish easily, they are also well suited for pasture renovation and minor field repairs.

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### Overview

- Uses:** Pasture—Cover Crop—Forage
- Strengths:** Fast establishment  
High productivity  
Widely adapted  
Highly palatable
- Weaknesses:** Can outcompete alfalfa during cool, wet springs  
No drought tolerance  
Avoid overgrazing

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### Plant Information

- Winterhardiness:** Moderate to poor
- Drought-Tolerance:** Poor
- Wet soil tolerance:** Moderate
- Average Nitrogen Fixation:** NA
- Forage Yield Range:** 1 to 3 t DM / A (seeding year)
- Relative Forage Quality:** 109 to 134 (index value)
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### **Seed and Seeding Info**

<b>Seeds per lb:</b>	227,000
<b>Seeding Rate Alone:</b>	30-40 lb / acre
<b>Seeding Rate in Mixtures:</b>	6-10 lb / acre in a grass mix ; 4 lb / acre as nurse crop with alfalfa
<b>Range of Seeding Dates:</b>	Early to late spring, late summer
<b>Methods of seeding:</b>	Drill, broadcast, brilliant seeder
<b>Best seeding depth:</b>	¼ to ½ in
<b>Best Soil types:</b>	Some moisture-holding capacity
<b>pH tolerances:</b>	5.0 to 7.0

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## **Cultural and Harvest Information**

### **As a grazing crop?**

Italian ryegrass is highly palatable to grazing livestock and overgrazing must be avoided. Begin grazing when 6 to 8 inches of growth has accumulated then remove animals once stubble has reached 2-3 inches. Consider adding more fiber and reducing corn in the ration when grazing ryegrass-heavy pastures. Italian ryegrass can be effectively added to an existing pasture to boost the productivity of the stand short term. Ryegrass can be seeded in a mixture with other pasture species such as red clover, grazing alfalfa, and other cool season grasses. Pay close attention to the stand and grazing frequency if the spring is cool and wet in the seeding year.

### **As a haying crop?**

Italian ryegrass is a good companion with brome, timothy, orchardgrass, and other pasture species and will die in the second or third year. If machine harvesting, note that cutting ryegrasses with a sickle-bar mower can be difficult. Disc mower and drum mowers are highly preferred. Take the first cutting 60 days after seeding. For high hay quality, cut first time at boot stage. Italian ryegrass can also be used as an effective nurse crop in the seeding year for alfalfa. Lower seeding rates to 2 to 4 lb / acre to avoid competition with the alfalfa. Ryegrass provides higher quality forage than oats, which is a commonly used companion for seeding alfalfa.

### **Albert Lea Seed House Product Information Guide**

The information presented here is based on the best agronomic information we could cull from University Publications and other sources (usually identified). The cultural and agronomic information is relevant only to farming in the upper mid-west. This information is not infallible and is not a substitute for experience and/or education. We **do not guarantee** farming results based on

this information.