

ANNUAL RYEGRASS

A Deep Rooting Winter Cover Crop

Benefits of Overseeding



Summary of Ryegrass Benefits:

- Deep Rooting (36-60")
- Nitrogen Scavenger
- Improves Crop Yields
- Excellent Forage or Hay Crop
- Soybean Cyst Nematode Suppression
- Controls Erosion/Improves Water Quality
- Improves Soil Tilth

Build Soil & Boost Production



OPENING SOIL PATHWAYS

Compacted soil layers, natural or man-made, prevent corn and soybean roots from reaching their potential depth. In dry years, this shallow rooting starves plants from adequate moisture. Annual Ryegrass grows through and breaks up these compacted layers during winter and early spring, when rain and melted snow saturate deep into fragipan and glacial till soils. Root depths of between 5 and 6 feet are common.

GREATLY IMPROVES SOIL BIOLOGY

Annual Ryegrass roots create a vast root system that improves the texture and the amount of organic matter in the soil structure. The population of earth worms and microbes increases rapidly, which takes care of most ryegrass surface residual matter during the growing season. Access to deeper soil also allows crops to mine nutrients previously trapped beneath compacted layers.

Livestock manure disposal, a problem on many farms, can be an asset if applied to Annual Ryegrass. Annual Ryegrass scavenges excess nitrogen (keeping it in the soil profile) which is then available for the next crop.

MANAGEMENT OF ANNUAL RYEGRASS

Converting to no-till with cover crops requires new management know-how. In regards to Annual Ryegrass, we have details on planting methods and seeding rates, when to plant based on where you're located, the types and amounts of herbicides to use for controlling Annual Ryegrass and when to kill it in conjunction with spring crop planting. Control with recommended herbicides and good spraying practices while the ryegrass is still small (before jointing) results in excellent control.



ANNUAL RYEGRASS AS A COVER CROP
Improved organic matter and soil structure



CONVENTIONAL TILLAGE
Less organic matter, poor soil structure

ANNUAL RYEGRASS
(Lolium multiflorum)

**IT'S NOT THE SAME AS
CEREAL RYE**



FORAGE

Annual Ryegrass is a leafy, nutritious cool-season grass which is highly preferred by livestock as well as farm producers in overseeding and cover crop programs. It is estimated that over two and a half million acres of annual ryegrass are grown for forage in the USA every year. It is mostly utilized as pasture but is also widely used for hay, silage, haylage, baleage and green chop.



Annual ryegrass is a vigorous cool season grass with an extensive, fibrous root system. Because of the number of annual ryegrass types, there is some confusion when it comes to choosing the right one for use as a cover crop for corn or soybeans in the Midwest.

Ryegrass includes both perennial and annual species, and there are diploid and tetraploid varieties of each. Sometimes, annual ryegrass is called “Italian” or even “Westerwold.” These are, in fact, part of an evolving spectrum of the species (*Lolium multiflorum*).

SUMMARY OF RYEGRASS BENEFITS:

- Prevents soil erosion and nutrient run-off
- Deep rooting aids subsequent row crops in gaining moisture and nutrition
- Increases soil organic matter
- Great asset in managing livestock manure waste
- Ideal source of low-cost, nutritious forage or haylage
- May reduce field populations of soybean cyst nematode
- Cuts costs for field inputs while improving crop productivity
- Excellent nitrogen scavenger



Post Office Box 3366, Salem, Oregon 97302

PHONE (503) 364-2944 • Fax (503) 581-6819 • www.ryegrass.com



Annual Ryegrass roots break through soil compaction layers to reach water and nutrients.



Annual Ryegrass reduces the need for tilling, thus reducing tractor hours and the amount of fuel used.



Annual ryegrass planted in the fall, growing in corn stubble.

For more information, including a detailed management guide for ryegrass as a cover crop,

check the website of the Oregon Ryegrass Growers Seed Commission:

RyegrassCovercrop.com

Paid for by the Oregon Ryegrass Growers Seed Commission, an agency of the State of Oregon.