

# LOUISIANA HOME LAWN SERIES

A guide to maintaining a healthy Louisiana lawn



## Perennial ryegrass

### Description

Perennial ryegrass (*Lolium perenne* L.) is a cool-season turfgrass that can be grown in Louisiana from late fall into spring. Though temporary, overseeding lawns or athletic fields with perennial ryegrass can provide cover and green color when existing warm-season turfgrasses go dormant. It grows in a wide range of soils types and has an extensive root system. In general, perennial ryegrass is more expensive and has high turf quality compared to annual ryegrass. Seeds can be planted in midfall and generally establish within 4 to 6 weeks.



*Perennial ryegrass*

### Identification

Perennial ryegrass is a moderate to fine-textured turfgrass that is soft to the touch. Its glossy, dark green leaves are slender and sharply pointed at the tip. Seed heads are composed of a single flower stalk with small white-to-brown flowers attached alternately on the stalk. Perennial ryegrass produces no stolons (aboveground stems) or rhizomes (underground stems) but tillers from the base of the plant. Perennial ryegrass can be established quickly through seed.



*Slender leaves*



*Bunch growth habit*

### Growing Conditions

- **Soil Type:** Grows in a range of soil types.
- **Soil pH:** Prefers soil with a pH of 6 to 8. If the soil is too acidic (< pH 7), ryegrass will decline. Always follow soil test recommendations to achieve desired soil pH.
- **Light:** Prefers full-sun areas.
- **Growth Rate:** Establishes quickly from seed.

#### TIP

Before amending the soil, consider testing your soil at the LSU AgCenter Soil Testing and Plant Analysis Lab.

Visit [http://www.lsuagcenter.com/portals/our\\_offices/departments/spess/servicelabs/soil\\_testing\\_lab](http://www.lsuagcenter.com/portals/our_offices/departments/spess/servicelabs/soil_testing_lab) or contact your local extension office for more information.

# Maintenance Requirements

- **Mowing and Traffic:** Mow at 1 to 2 inches routinely during the growing season. Never remove more than one-third of the leaf blade height at one mowing. Mowing at the appropriate height is key in preventing scalping and reducing weed encroachment. Perennial ryegrass has good traffic tolerance but poor recuperation because it is a tillering turfgrass.
- **Fertilization:** Fertilize with up to 2 pounds of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet per year. Fertilizer should be applied no earlier than two to three weeks after seed germination. Never apply more than 1 pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet per application.
- **Irrigation:** Naturally occurring rainfall may provide sufficient water for maintaining a healthy turfgrass in normal years, but irrigation may need to be applied to prevent plant water stress during drought periods.
- **Dethatching and Aeration:** Because perennial ryegrass is not suited for year-round growth in Louisiana, thatch formation should not be an issue. Compaction can form more quickly on finer-textured soils and in areas where there is high traffic. Compaction can limit seed germination and emergence. Aeration can be performed prior to seeding but aeration should be performed when the warm-season turfgrass is actively growing.

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## Establishment Methods

Establishment of perennial ryegrass for temporary cover or overseeding of a warm-season perennial lawn can be achieved through seeding.

- **Seed:** Select and purchase desired seed and follow the manufacturer's labeled directions for the rate of seed per area. If perennial ryegrass seed is being used for overseeding a perennial warm-season turfgrass, use a seeding rate of 5 to 7 pounds pure live seed (PLS) per 1,000 square feet. Be sure to work seed into the existing turfgrass canopy for greater seed establishment.

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Pub. 3624-RR (Online Only) 2/19

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