

Perennial ryegrass (*Lolium perenne*)



Image from University of California - Davis

Perennial ryegrass is a cool-season bunch-type grass commonly used on athletic fields. It is well adapted to athletic turf where wear resistance and recuperative capacity are important; however, it does not withstand cold temperatures or disease pressure very well. New varieties have improved color, density, and disease resistance. Perennial ryegrass is desirable for athletic surfaces mainly due to rapid seed germination and seedling establishment qualities. It is often combined with other species such as Kentucky bluegrass and tall fescue to enhance turfgrass stand quality and performance. Kentucky bluegrass is very slow to establish, but when mixed with perennial ryegrass, athletic surfaces can be playable in a much shorter amount of time.

Perennial ryegrass is often used in warmer climates for winter overseeding. Warm-season grasses go dormant and turn brown in cooler temperatures. To maintain color and continue use during cooler temperatures, fields are overseeded with perennial ryegrass.

Identifying Characteristics:

Growth Habit: bunch-type

Vernation: folded

Ligule: medium, rounded, membranous, may be toothed near top (0.5-1.5 mm)

Auricles: short, not clasping

Sheath: flattened, reddish at base

Collar: broad, divided

Leaf tip: pointed

Leaf Blades: adaxial: deeply ridged upper surface with midrib; abaxial: smooth and glossy, keeled

Seedhead: spike with flattened spikelets along each stem

