

Lolium perenne

[Synonyms : *Lolium boucheanum*, *Lolium brasilianum*, *Lolium canadense*, *Lolium marschallii*, *Lolium multiflorum*, *Lolium perenne* var. *brasilianum*, *Lolium perenne* var. *cristatum*, *Lolium perenne* var. *pacyi*, *Lolium perenne* var. *perenne*]

PERENNIAL RYEGRASS is a perennial grass. Native to Europe (including Britain), to temperate Asia and to North Africa, it has green or purplish flower spikelets.

It is also known as *Ausdauernder Lolch* (German), *Ausdauerndes Weidelgras* (German), Beardless darnel, Common darnel, Common ray, Common ryegrass, Crested ryegrass, Darnel, Darnell, *Deutsches Weidelgras* (German), Eavers, *Engelskt rajgräs* (Swedish), *Englanninraiheinä* (Finnish), *Englisches Raygras* (German), English ryegrass, *Hèrbe italienne* (Channel Islander-Jersey Norman-French), *Hèrbe perpétuelle* (Channel Islander-Jersey Norman-French), *Italiaanse Raaigras* (Afrikaans), Italian ryegrass, *Italienisches Raygras* (German), *Jilek anglický* (Czech), *Jilek vytrvalý* (Czech), *Mätonoh trváci* (Slovak), Nonesuch, Perennial ray, *Raaigras* (Dutch), *Rajgras pastbiščnyj* (Russian), Raygrass, *Ray-grass anglais* (French), Red darnel, *Régrasse* (Channel Islander-Guernsey), *Renrepe* (Swedish), *Rhygwellt Lluosflwydd* (Welsh), Ryegrass, *Sikrana* (Maltese), White nonesuch, and *Zycica trwala* (Polish).

The flowers are pollinated by the wind.

Perenne means ‘perennial’.

The tiny brown seeds (grain) have been eaten as a cereal by man but, not least because of its size and the difficulty in harvesting and handling it, it has been viewed as a famine food.

This grass has been cultivated in Britain for about 350 years. It is probably the first one to be deliberately grown as pasture – for which authorities point out it is often mixed with other grasses and for which its natural and potent ant-repellent qualities would be valuable.

Today it is cultivated for grazing, fodder, green manure, lawns and playing fields.

It was introduced elsewhere from Europe, including North America and is grown widely now for fodder. It is interesting that some American authorities note the preference of the Amish communities (who still farm in North America today with a minimum of mechanization) for perennial ryegrass as a green manure as their horse-drawn ploughs turn it over more easily (it has a shallower root system than that of some other grasses).

Of course the grass also offers grazing for wild life from small rodents through rabbits to larger animals such as deer and in addition food for both song and game birds.