

# Italian Ryegrass

*Lolium perenne* L.  
ssp. *multiflorum* (Lam.) Husnot

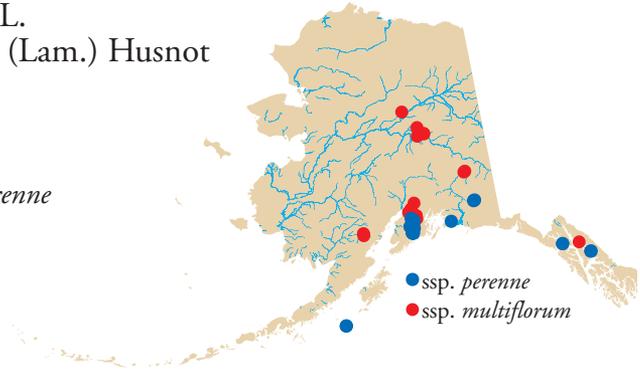
## Related Species

Perennial ryegrass

*L. perenne* L. ssp. *perenne*

Darnel ryegrass

*L. temulentum* L.



## Description

Italian ryegrass is a short rhizomatous annual or biennial bunchgrass that grows 1–3 feet high. Culms are generally erect and often purplish at the base. Leaves are dark green, shiny, and prominently veined with flat blades that are  $\frac{1}{8}$ – $\frac{1}{4}$  of an inch wide and have conspicuous auricles. The spikes are distinctive, with alternately arranged spikelets that are arranged edgewise along the flowering stem, giving the spike a flattened appearance. The lemmas are conspicuously awned.



*Italian ryegrass.*

USDA Forest Service photo  
by Elizabeth Bella

## Similar Species

There are a number of similar looking grasses in Alaska, but *Lolium* species have only one spikelet per node, oriented with the narrow edge towards the main axis of the inflorescence. The red-tinged base of Italian ryegrass, its awned lemmas, and its short glumes distinguish this plant from two other exotic species, perennial ryegrass (*L. perenne* L. ssp.) and darnel ryegrass (*L. temulentum* L.).

**Management**

Herbicides have been used to control plants in agricultural settings, but Italian ryegrass is gaining resistance to several herbicides (Carey 1995). It has not persisted at some sites where it was previously planted in Alaska (Densmore et al. 2000).

**Notes**

Italian ryegrass has been used as an emergency grain crop in times of starvation in Europe.



*XID Services photo by Richard Old*

*Perennial ryegrass.*