

TEFF

COVER CROP FACT SHEET FOR IOWA

Teff (*Eragrostis tef*) is a drought tolerant summer annual grass that is sometimes used as a cover crop in Iowa to help fight soil compaction, suppress weeds, and control erosion. Teff grass can also be used for supplemental livestock feed.



Identifying Features

- » Fine-stemmed, bunch grass
- » Very short ligules
- » Leaf sheath is smooth and hairless and distinctly shorter than the internodes

Cultural Traits

- » Summer annual grass
- » Minimum germination soil temperature: 65° F
- » Cold temperature tolerance: 32° F
- » Seeding date: Early May to Early August*

Planting Information*

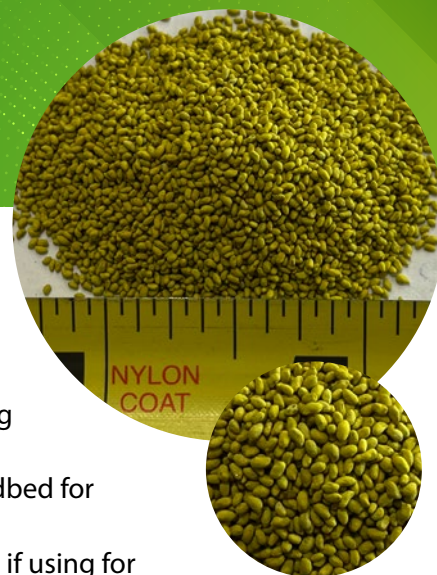
- » **Drill** at 1/8 - 1/4 inch (4 lbs./acre PLS**)
- » **Broadcast** (5 lbs./acre PLS)
- » **Aerial** (Not recommended)

*Planting information from Midwest Cover Crop Council (midwestcovercrops.org). Refer to local NRCS office recommendations (Iowa Field Office Technical Guide, Section 4, 340 Cover Crop) for seeding dates and rates pertinent to location specific financial assistance program requirements.

**Pure Live Seed

Additional planting information:

- » ~1,000,000 seeds/lb.
- » Teff has an extremely small seed, so seeding depth is critical.
- » Teff needs a firm seedbed for establishment.
- » Increase seeding rate if using for forage/grazing.
- » Planting in a mixture can enhance performance as a cover crop.



Teff Seed
(Shown with seed treatment)



Teff grass leaves



Teff seeds are tiny (Jon Zirkle)



Teff between pumpkin rows (Dr. Rebecca Brown)

C:N (Carbon:Nitrogen) Ratio

- » Teff Early vegetative 12:1 to 20:1

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Teff grass up close



Baled teff grass

Performance

Dry matter = 200 - 2,000 lbs./acre per year
(Biomass quantity is dependent on planting and termination dates and precipitation.)

Performance Ratings

» Cash crop interseed (<i>early vegetative</i>)	Poor
» Cash crop overseed (<i>late seed fill</i>)	Poor
» Grazing quality	Fair
» Mechanical forage harvest	Very good
» Nitrogen fixer	N/A
» Nitrogen scavenger	Good
» Weed suppression	Good
» Compaction fighter	Very good
» Erosion control	Good
» Lasting residue	Good
» Quick grower	Good
» Drought tolerance	Very good
» Low fertility tolerance	Fair
» Shade tolerance	Poor

Additional Considerations

- » Teff can establish a weed-suppressing canopy in as little as three weeks.
- » It is resilient to hot temperatures and water stress, and can provide a good option for conserving water.
- » Teff will winterkill and is easily terminated by chemicals.

Teff Grass



Up close shot of teff grass field. (Renovo Seed)

This fact sheet is a collaborative effort of USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Iowa State University Extension and Outreach to provide cover crop options and information for Iowa landowners.