

Register of Australian Herbage Plant Cultivars

A. Grasses

2. Ryegrass

Lolium rigidum Gaud. (annual ryegrass) cv. Merredin Early

Reg. No. A-2d-2

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Origin

Developed by the Department of Agriculture of Western Australia at the Avondale and Merredin Research Stations. This cultivar originated from single plant selections taken in 1946 from bulk pastures of cv. Wimmera on the Avondale Research Station in the Beverley district. After preliminary observation, a number of lines were transferred to the Merredin Research Station where they were found to be earlier and more prolific than cv. Wimmera. In 1953 seed from 15 selected plants was sown as the base of the new cultivar. It was named Merredin Early and released to farmers in 1955. Selection by the breeder was continued for a number of years to maintain purity and uniformity. Pedigree seed is maintained by the Department of Agriculture of Western Australia.

Morphological description

Cannot be satisfactorily distinguished on morphological characters from cv. Wimmera. It is, however, more uniform. Early in the season and particularly in Western Australia it is reported to be more erect and leafier than Wimmera. In the eastern States Wimmera is regarded as the leafier of the two, particularly late in the season.

Agronomic characters (1, 3, 4)

Flowers and matures 10-14 days earlier than cv. Wimmera and its early growth is more vigorous. It is therefore better adapted to environments where precipitation is lower and there is a shorter growing season (four to five months). Where the season is longer, Wimmera, though it does not make such good early spring growth, dries off about a fortnight later and gives a longer period of green feed. The greater uniformity in maturity of Merredin Early makes grazing management easier.

Merredin Early has been recommended as preferable to Wimmera in reclaiming areas of high salinity. In trials during two years in the Temora-Barellan district of New South Wales this cultivar gave higher yields than *Hordeum leporinum*; it also performed better than Wimmera in drought years (1).

References

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4. Reeves, J.T., and Fisher, H.M. (1960). The Merredin Early strain of Wimmera ryegrass. *J. Agric. West. Aust.* **1** (4th Ser.), 353-4.