

Why Rye?

Rye's exceptional attributes make it a critical tool for climate smart agricultural strategies in the Northeast and Upper-Midwest.

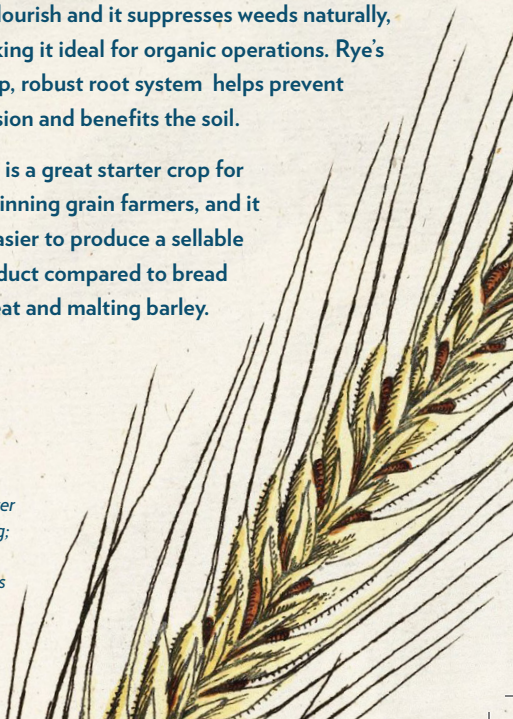
Rye is a small grain, and is primarily used as a *winter grain* —planted in late fall, left to overwinter, and harvested in early summer— because of its hardiness. It is the most cold-tolerant of all the small grains and has even been grown in the Arctic Circle.



Rye has long been used as a break crop by conventional growers. It requires few inputs to flourish and it suppresses weeds naturally, making it ideal for organic operations. Rye's deep, robust root system helps prevent erosion and benefits the soil.

Rye is a great starter crop for beginning grain farmers, and it is easier to produce a sellable product compared to bread wheat and malting barley.

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A detailed botanical illustration of rye. The top right shows a close-up of a rye spikelet with its awns. The left and bottom edges feature long, slender stalks with a textured, fibrous appearance, drawn in a yellowish-brown color. The background is a light, aged paper color.

Rye Markets

Markets for rye are expanding, as consumers embrace the quality, versatility, sustainability, and the wonderful taste of this grain.

Rye is an increasingly popular cover crop, and demand for seed in some areas has recently grown fourfold. There are also good markets for grain crop rye, depending on the variety. Open pollinated rye is sought for its unique, heirloom characteristics whereas hybrid rye is preferred for its high yields.

Food grade rye is nutrient dense, and can help regulate glucose; it is sold as whole grains or as flour, which comes in coarse, fine, dark, and light grades.

Rye is used in distilling to meet the growing demand for rye spirits and for inclusion of rye in corn-based spirits such as bourbon. New York has recently created the *Empire Rye* designation for spirits made with rye grown in that state; demand for quality seed is high. Malted rye is also popular with craft brewers who are creating *Rye-PAs*.

There is a developing market for rye used in animal feed. It is good forage for cattle, and studies point to a reduced need for antibiotics when fed to pigs.

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