

Tall Oatgrass

Arrhenatherum elatius



DESCRIPTION

Tall oatgrass is a perennial cool-season bunch grass with very short rhizomes. Its **stems** are erect and grow from three to five feet tall and are very leafy. Leaf blades are flat and rough to the touch, and generally without any hairs. Seed heads are narrow **panicles** six to 10-inches long with long, twisted, angled, exposed **awns**, resembling that of oats. Two types exist in the Willamette Valley – a non-bulbous form and a **bulbous** form, which is characterized by its underground **corms** stacked four to five high.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- Tall, perennial, clump-forming grass
- Flowers with one long bent and twisted awn (looks like a single needle), arising from the back of each flower spikelet
- Bulbous corms (underground)

WHEN TO FIND TALL OATGRASS

Tall oatgrass can be found throughout the year.

WHERE TO FIND TALL OATGRASS

It is commonly found in meadows, fields, prairie, open ground, forest edges, streamsides, rock outcrops, waste places, and roadsides.

WHAT TO DO

Record and mark its location but do not attempt to pull tall oat grass as positive identification can be difficult.

Introduced from the Mediterranean region of Europe in the early 1800s as forage for livestock, tall oatgrass is now found throughout most of the United States. In Oregon, it is encroaching into upland prairie and oak savanna habitat in the Willamette Valley and the Columbia Gorge.

Seeds produced shed readily (shake-out easily) at maturity. Germination occurs after fall rains, with rapid growth of seedlings and new sprouts occurring in spring. Little is known about how tall oatgrass is dispersed.

Tall oatgrass threatens the integrity of native ecosystems by out-competing native species. In Oregon, it reduces the amount of native vegetation available for the rare Fender's blue butterfly. Burning and mowing seems to be the most effective means of keeping established populations in check.

REFERENCES

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