

Beardless Wildrye

(Elymus triticoides)



Where does it grow? Beardless wildrye is a native grass which grows at low to medium elevations, usually in moist sites. It is well adapted to brackish or alkaline bottomlands and may grow in pure stands where moisture is adequate. It is found from Montana to Washington, south to western Texas and California.

Is it important? Because of its coarseness it is of only secondary value. It has been experimented with in seedings but it is a low producer and is not as desirable for forage as other seeded species.

What does it look like? Beardless wildrye is a perennial with extensive creeping rhizomes. It is 2 to 3½ feet tall and has stiff leaves which are flat early in the growth season, becoming rolled later in the year. The spikelets occur two per node except that some of the spikelets near the top may be single. The glumes and lemmas are very sharp pointed and may be awn-tipped. The glumes have a single vein and are quite narrow.

Description:

Length of Life--Long-lived perennial.

Height--2 to 3½ feet.

Bunch or sod--Sod.



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Growth Period--Spring.

How does it spread?--Seed and rhizomes.

Shape of leaves--Narrow, flat or rolled, smooth edged.

Location of leaves--Mostly from stem.

Other names--Alkali ryegrass.

How to use it. Beardless wildrye may be used for early spring use. Its coarseness later in the season lessens its desirability. Dense stands are sometimes cut for hay.

Does it look like anything else? Beardless wildrye is often confused with western wheatgrass due to their similar habitat and growth habit. It can be distinguished from western wheatgrass by examining the seedheads to see if the spikelets are double or single. In beardless wildrye there are usually two spikelets at a node except a few single spikelets at the top of the spike. Western wheatgrass has only an occasional pair of spikelets at one node, the majority of them being single. Beardless wildrye also lacks the minute saw-toothed edge found on the leaves of western wheatgrass and it is generally taller than western wheatgrass. The glumes of beardless wildrye are narrow with only a single vein while those of western wheatgrass are relatively broad and have several veins.

