

# Tuber Oatgrass

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TUBER OATGRASS — *Arrhenatherum elatius* var. *bulbosum* —  
Showing nature of underground  
reproduction, foliage, and seed  
heads.

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# Tuber Oatgrass

(*Arrhenatherum elatius* var. *bulbosum*)

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Illustrations by Cathrine Davis Young

Other common name: Bulbous oatgrass.

Tuber oatgrass, as the name implies, reproduces from a bulblike underground growth as well as from seed. These "bulbs" are more correctly called corms and generally develop in dense clusters, each growing from the top of the one below. The "bulbs" are flattened and occur in strings resembling the rattles on a snake. When these tubers are broken apart, as they would be in cultivation, each one may form a new plant and start the development of another group. The grass is practically identical in appearance to the common tall oatgrass, which often forms an important part of the pasture mixtures in the state. Tuber oatgrass is a desirable forage plant under some conditions, but it is difficult to eradicate, especially bothersome in gardens, and is most commonly thought of as a weed. It has been found in several western Oregon counties.

Tuber oatgrass commonly grows from 3 to 5 feet tall. Leaf blades are flat, from  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{3}{8}$  inch wide. Heads are from 6 to 12 inches long. Seeds are often purplish, shiny, from  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{3}{8}$  inch long, and possess a twisted awn from  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch long.

**Control.** Cultivation is the best method of controlling this pest on large areas. Most of the corms are in the top few inches of the soil in dense mats. The land should be plowed in late May or June, and the furrow slice left on edge, to dry out as many of the roots as possible. The land should then be worked down with a spring-tooth harrow to bring more of the corms to the surface. The area should be thoroughly cultivated several times during the balance of the season. Using this system, it would be desirable to plant an annual hay crop on the infested area in the fall or early spring. This crop can be removed for hay, followed immediately by a dry plowing.

Small areas can be dug out by hand or treated with chemicals. A layer of several inches of straw over the area will cause many of the roots and corms to grow into it. The straw can then be burned and many of the roots will be destroyed. Small patches can be treated with dry applications of sodium chlorate in the spring when just a few inches of rain can be expected the balance of that season. A shallow application of carbon bisulphide in holes 5 inches deep and 18 inches apart should give good results on small areas. Detailed discussion on the use of carbon bisulphide, as well as other methods of controlling perennial weeds, will be found in Extension Bulletin 510.

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