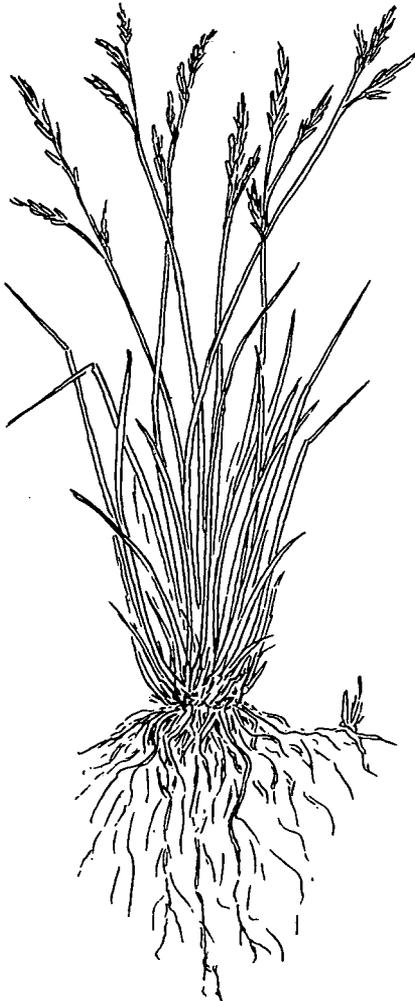


Green Fescue

(*Festuca viridula*)



Where is it found? Green fescue abounds on high altitude grasslands and meadows, particularly in the Blue Mountains of north-eastern Oregon. It grows on well-drained soils. This plant has a number of bedfellows like sedges, bluegrasses, and weeds with showy flowers. It is an alpine plant adapted to long snow cover.

Is it important? Yes. Sheep do better on this plant than on most other grasses. Cattle graze it throughout the season as do big game animals. It holds its protein better in the late summer than other common grasses.

◀ Green fescue is the most important grass in the high altitude ranges of northeastern Oregon (1/3 x).

What does it look like? Green fescue grows typically in dense bunches on steep slopes and benchland, mostly in open stands mixed with other grasses and forage plants. Its coarse roots are effective in binding the soil and preventing erosion. Seed heads are erect and open. The rich green hue of the foliage contrasts strikingly with the bright bluish-purple heads. Leaves tend to form a heavy rosette at the base, and on good sites they are so close together as to make a sod.

Heads are relatively ▶ short and open (5 x).



Description:

Length of Life--Long-lived perennial.

Height--1 to 3 1/2 feet.

Bunch or Sod--Bunch with dense tufts.

Growth Period--Long, throughout summer and early fall.

How Does It Spread--By seed; produces a large crop, but seed is of low quality.

Shape of Leaves--Mostly basal, erect, narrow, smooth, loosely folded or inrolled.

Description: (continued)

Shape and Size of Grain--Narrowly lance-shaped, sharp-pointed, about 3/8 inch long.

Other Names--Also called mountain bunchgrass.

How to Use It--Responds well to a rotation grazing scheme so that part of range goes to seed each year.

Does it look like anything else? Might be confused with sheep fescue, but is larger and foliage is coarser. The distinct bunch habit and bright green (how it gets its name) are characteristics of this grass on high altitude ranges.



Alpine areas with long snow cover, such as the Wallowa Mountain tops shown here, are the home of green fescue.