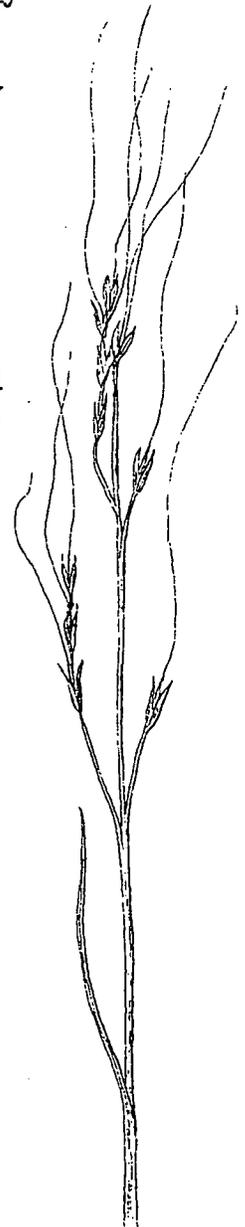
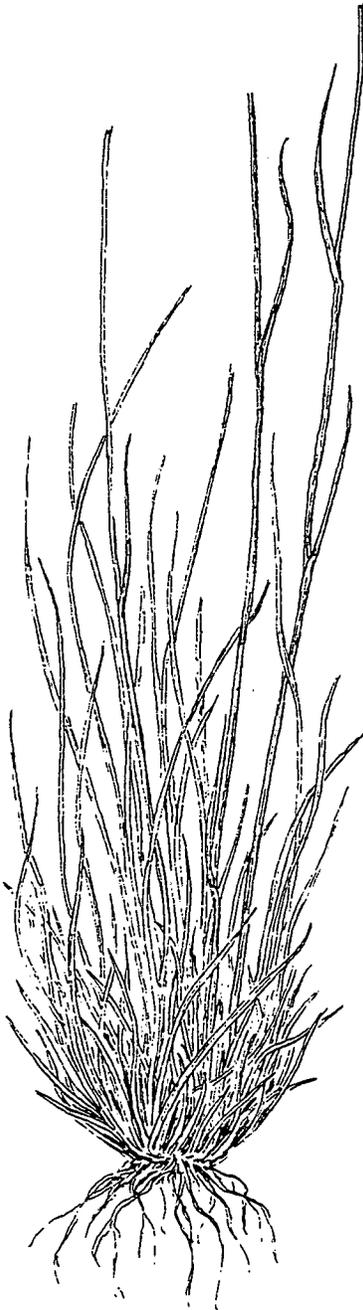


Needle and Thread

(*Stipa comata*)

Where does it grow? Needle and thread is scattered widely in Oregon, east of the Cascades. It is common on all drier areas, but no large stands can be found. It is found mostly in dry, sandy soils along with ponderosa pine and juniper in the higher areas. Open areas and abandoned cropland also are places where the grass may be found.

Is it important? Needle and thread is very important, especially as an early spring forage plant. It begins its growth early and plays a large part in saving other grasses from too heavy grazing in early spring when they would be hurt most. It has long beards which make livestock pass it by after the plant has headed out. The long-bearded seeds may injure the livestock by working into mouth parts and hide if the plant is grazed when dry. If there is rain in the late summer and early fall, needle and thread greens up and produces more feed. The seeds are generally dropped by this time. If any leafage is left for winter, it is usually eaten before spring by livestock and game animals. Since needle and thread does not produce heavy stands in Oregon, it may not be as important as other grasses livestock like better because leafage is less coarse. The plant does not produce many seeds and where too heavily grazed, it will not remain.



◀ Needle and thread is usually 2 to 3 feet tall with many leaves at the base (1/10 x).

The spike is 1/3 to 1/2 the ▶ length of the stem (1/2 x).

What does it look like? It is a large, leafy bunchgrass, growing 2 to 3 feet high. The long heads are sometimes nearly

half the length of the stem. Most characteristic is the long beard growing at the tip of each seed. These beards are usually twisted and 4 to 5 inches long. This feature gives the plant its name, since the seed and beards look like a needle and thread. It becomes green very early in the spring, dries out during midsummer, but after the fall rains it greens up again.

Description:

Length of Life--Perennial.

Height--Usually about 2 to 3 feet tall.

Bunch or Sod--Bunch.

Growth Period--Begins growth early while other grasses are still dry, and greens up again after rains come in the fall.

How Does It Spread? Entirely by seed. A large seed supply is not produced and if the plant is grazed before seeds are scattered, reproduction may not take place.

Leaves--Harsh, flat, or with inrolled edges, and loose sheaths (part covering the stem).

The seed is small with a 5 to 6-inch beard growing from the end of it ▶
(1 x).

Location of Leaves--Many at the base with a few scattered up the stem.

Seeds--About 1/4 inch long after the beard is removed. It has a fine hairy covering (lemma) on the outer side.

Other Names--Long-awned porcupine grass, common needlegrass, western needlegrass, sandgrass, silkgrass.

Does it look like anything else? No other Oregon grasses have the long beard of needle and thread.

