

Pinegrass

(*Calamagrostis rubescens*)



Pinegrass is one of the most important forage plants in eastern Oregon forest (1/2 x).

What does it look like? Usually makes an open mat or turf under the trees. Very few seed heads. Leaves mostly come from the base and usually droop a little. They are tough and hard to the touch. Seed heads are rather compact and look much like those of June grass. Rubescens means red, and foliage and stems are sometimes red. A spot of red on a leaf may fool you when tracking a wounded deer.

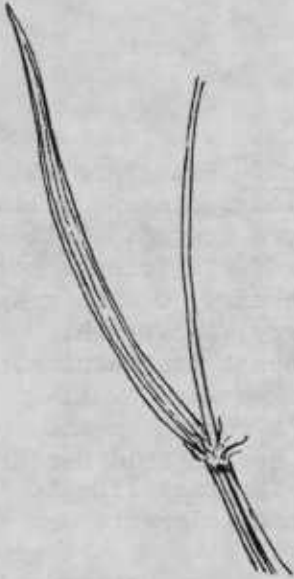
Heads are scarce, rarely found except in sunny openings (seed: 2 x).

Where is it found? Pinegrass is the carpet for both lodgepole and yellow pine forests in eastern Oregon. Aside from pine trees some of its friends and associates are huckleberry, Oregon grape, Idaho fescue, snowberry, snowbrush, spirea, strawberry, heart leaf arnica, and elk sedge. It likes warm, well-drained soil and isn't common on the wet mountain meadows nor on cold north slopes where fir and tamarack like to grow. It is very shade tolerant.

Is it important? Yes. Cattle and sheep take to the mountains in summer just as the Indians did. It stays green all summer and in August when other grasses drop to 5% protein or less, pinegrass still has 8%, so stock can maintain weight on it. It is better for cattle than sheep, since it is tough and fibrous in August. Deer and elk eat it clear up to snow time. Without it, millions of acres of forest would erode badly. It forms a tough sod in the top 8 inches.



Description:



If you can find a stem with a leaf coming from it, note the rim of hairs at the purplish collar (1 x).

Length of Life--Long-lived perennial. Fire resistant.
Height--Heads about 1 1/2 to 2 feet, foliage usually about 8 inches.
Bunch or Sod--Sod, tough and erosion resistant.
Growth Period--Gets going fairly early and stays green all summer.
How Does it Spread?--Mainly by roots that spread and send up new plants at intervals.
Shape of Leaves--Long, narrow, drooping, taper to a long sharp point.
Shape and Size of Seed--Very small, with a short beard that has an elbow on it. A ring of short bristly hairs at base. Shape of oat kernel.
Other Names--Reed grass.

Does it look like anything else? Heads look a little like June grass. If in doubt, get a few roots. Also there is a very small but distinct ring of hairs at a purplish collar where leaves bend away from stem.



Here is the home of pinegrass. It makes a loose, open turf beneath pine trees.