

Timothy

(Phleum pratense)



Where does it grow? Timothy escaped from cultivation many years ago. It is now generally established in Oregon. It is of interest to know that timothy is distributed over most of North America, Europe, Asia, and other temperate regions of the world and is native to Europe. It grows best in the Northern half of the U.S. but does grow south along chains of mountains.

Timothy can be found growing in a variety of soil conditions but is best adapted to medium elevations, cool humid habitats, and well-drained but moist clay or loam soils. It is not tolerant to alkali soils and withstands some shade.

In range country, you can find it in moist meadows, weedy or grassy parks, stream banks, moist canyon bottoms, open grassy slopes, woodlands, timber openings, roadsides, and trails.

Is it important? The primary value of timothy is hay, especially when grown with legumes. Even though it is found outside of cultivation it is not considered a primary range forage plant because it cannot withstand heavy grazing

and is not abundant. Timothy is highly palatable and of moderate nutritive value. It is valued as a horse feed but is generally mixed with other grasses and legumes when fed to other livestock. Sheep like it during the summer months. Cattle and horses like it spring, summer and fall.

Irrigation is necessary for successful production of timothy in most range areas although it is grown without irrigation in moist valleys and on the coast. Timothy is often mixed with clover and alfalfa to get a higher yield and feeding value for cattle and sheep. It is not adapted to permanent pastures. It is replaced in a few years by slower-developing but longer-lived grasses. When cut for hay in full bloom, it is especially high in nutritive value.

Timothy is limited in conservation work to reseeding cutover, burned over, and overgrazed mountain ranges where precipitation and growing season is sufficient to allow seed production. The seed is not expensive and is easy to handle. As a good soil binder for steep hillsides, timothy rates second to other grasses because of low root production.

When seeded on most ranges, timothy is relatively short-lived. A heavy producer the first few years, it soon declines in importance which is a desirable characteristic on cutover lands.

What does it look like? Timothy is a perennial bunchgrass reaching a height of 2 to 4 feet. There are usually 5 to 6 leaves arranged alternately on each stem. At the base of the stem, there is a small swollen area just above the roots which is called a "haplacorm". The roots are fibrous and very shallow. The flowering head of timothy is very compact and cylindrical in shape.

Description:

Length of Life--Short-lived perennial, more or less dormant over the winter but may become green if good weather occurs during the winter months.

Height--2 to 4 feet.

Bunch or sod--Tufted or bunch growth.

How does it spread?--Seeds which mature in late July or early August, immediately fall to the ground and germinate with a few days or weeks.

Leaves--Flat, rough or harsh to the touch above.

Flowers--Late June to mid-July.

Roots--Shallow, fibrous roots which are few in number.

Does it look like anything else? Timothy resembles the native "mountain timothy" to some extent. Mountain timothy is found usually in alpine meadows and bogs but occasionally it is found at medium elevations and along the coast. The following illustrations will show how you can tell them apart. Mountain timothy usually blooms later in July and early August in the high mountains. Mountain timothy is also lower in stature than timothy. Timothy is sometimes confused with meadow foxtail (RPL 50). However, meadow foxtail has short twisted awns giving the inflorescence a somewhat fuzzy appearance. Timothy is awnless.

Mountain Timothy



Timothy



Meadow Foxtail

