

# Nevada Bluegrass

(Poa nevadensis)

Where does it grow? That's a good question, because it is found on plains, open hillsides, foothills, dry meadows, and wet meadows. Although Nevada bluegrass grows luxuriantly on the rich soils of moist meadows, it is most common and widely distributed on the drier sites. In Oregon it is found east of the Cascades, and is common to the Ponderosa Pine zone and native meadows that may be flooded briefly by spring runoff. Silver Creek and Silver Valleys have many meadows of almost solid stands of Nevada blue.

Is it important? Nevada bluegrass is excellent forage for livestock, good for elk, and fair to good for deer. The bluegrass hay produced on moist meadows is equal to timothy in feeding value, although its production seldom exceeds one ton per acre. Other than on moist meadows, it seldom becomes abundant, but is plentiful enough on some ranges to furnish considerable forage. It is grazed eagerly by all classes of livestock in the fall. Unfortunately, it can be killed easily by heavy grazing and trampling.



Nevada bluegrass is very common in Lake and Harney and other nearby counties.

What does it look like? Nevada bluegrass is a rather handsome tufted perennial that generally grows in small bunches. The leaves are mostly basal, narrow, folded, light green, and 6 to 12 inches long. The stem leaves are shorter -- 2 to 4 inches long. It has stalks 18 to 30 inches high; the stalks are rough to the touch. The heads (panicles) are narrow, open, pyramid shaped, with spreading branches whorled in separate groups of 3 to 5. The individual flower groups (spikelets) have 3 to 6 flowers, and are slightly flattened and crowded at the ends of the branchlets. These spikelets become purplish when mature.

## Description:

Length of life -- Perennial.

Height -- Usually about 1 1/2 to 2 feet high.

Bunch or sod -- Bunch.

Growth period -- Mid-March to late June, and again in the fall with September rains.

How does it spread? -- By seed.

Shape of leaves -- Folded (sometimes flat), rather narrow and light green.  
The ligules (small, thin membranes at the junction of blade and sheath) are thin, papery, and about 1/8 inch long.

Location of leaves -- Mostly basal with shorter leaves from the stems.

Shape and size of seed -- About 1/8 to 3/16 inch long, often purplish or yellowish brown on upper portions of lemma.

Other names -- None.

How to use it -- Light grazing spring and fall.

Does it look like anything else? Yes, it looks like other common "bunch" bluegrasses such as Sandberg bluegrass, Canby bluegrass, and Big bluegrass, but is generally much taller than the first two and shorter than the third one. It has a wider range than the others -- from wet meadow to dry range. It has a purple color when mature, but in that stage it resembles Idaho fescue.



The individual flower groups (spikelets) are without beards.



Nevada bluegrass often is in almost pure stands on the wild meadows of Grant and Harney Counties. Above is an old time picture showing the start of the haying season on 5,000 acres of Nevada bluegrass in Silvies Valley -- Grant and Harney Counties.