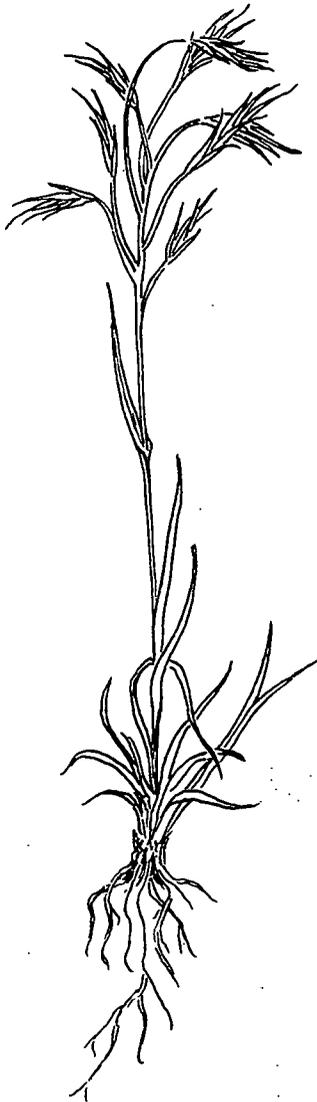


# Cheatgrass Brome

(*Bromus Tectorum*)



Where does it grow? Cheatgrass is found in every county in Oregon but it does on warm, dry soils in eastern Oregon at low elevations. South slopes; abandoned crop fields; ranges along highways where careless smokers start fires; areas around buildings or dry hillsides above water where livestock kill other vegetation; all such places are duck soup for cheatgrass. There are miles of it on the bombing range south of Boardman and along the Snake River in Malheur County. It is the chief forage on about 10 million Oregon acres.

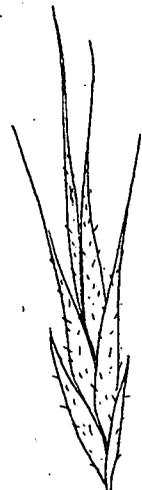
Is it important? It is one of Oregon's most important range plants, although its home is the Mediterranean area. Without it some Oregon stock would have nothing to eat. In good years it often out-yields any other grass and is excellent early spring range. It has these drawbacks: 1. its yield varies enormously from year to year; 2. it all ripens at once and it burns like powder; 3. it has sharp points on the seeds that stick under the tongues of animals; 4. it allows severe erosion in the years when it doesn't grow well. Also, it smuts badly in some years and some ranchers say this smut may cause abortion if cows calve late. Nearly all Oregon range fires are due to cheatgrass.

◀ Cheatgrass brome is usually a foot tall, turns purplish-red as it ripens (1/2 x).

What does it look like? It is an annual that usually comes up in the fall, goes to seed in May or June, and dies in July. The whole plant turns a reddish color at ripening time and a hillside covered with it has a pretty, painted look.

Most of the red color disappears when the plant is ripe and dead. The seeds are bearded and the heads fluff out so that a solid stand has a feathery appearance when ripe. The seeds shatter shortly after ripening and they like to stick into stockings, woolen clothes, and the wool on sheep.

Each head usually has 10 or more spikelets like this ▶ and each spikelet has 5 to 10 seeds (2 x).



There is a sharp point on one end of the seed and a beard on the other end. The plant may be only an inch or two or up to two feet tall.

Beards are usually half an inch long--a little longer than the seed (4 x).

Description:

Length of Life--Annual.

Height--Usually about a foot. In poor years or in thin soil, it may be only an inch or two.

Bunch or Sod--Bunch.

Growth Period--Comes up in fall, dies in June or July, furnishes lots of feed on low ranges in March and April.

How Does It Spread?--Entirely by seeds. They stick in wool of sheep, hair of dogs and coyotes. A very heavy seeder, often 400 pounds or more to the acre.

Shape of Leaves--Narrow, coming to a long point.

Location of Leaves--A few at base, scattered up the stems.

How to Use it--Pasture heavily in spring, then remove stock.

Shape and Size of Seed--About a third of an inch long after beard is broken off; long and narrow, much like a very thin oat, except it has a furrow on the side attached to the spikelet.

Other Names--Bronco grass, downy brome, tickle grass, needle grass, June grass.

Does it look like anything else? All the wild brome grasses have beards and so do some of the wild rye grasses and others. The beards of this grass are straight (not twisted) and are about half an inch long. The leaves and heads are covered with fine, soft hairs that give the foliage a downy appearance, especially at the base of the leaves. Leaves are rather soft and usually droop. No other common plant looks much like this.

◀ The sheath of the leaves (the part wrapped around the stem) is usually covered with small, soft hairs. They are on the leaf too, but aren't so noticeable (2 x).

