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# Alfilaria

(*Erodium cicutarium*)



Alfilaria is the best annual on Oregon's ranges (1/8 x).

Where does it grow? Alfilaria, usually called filaree, grows in dry open ground, and often in waste and denuded areas. It is most abundant at lower altitudes in the Columbia Basin and in southern Oregon, but is found in all counties. Filaree grows abundantly on sandy soils and on clay types where other vegetation is not too dense. It likes south slopes. In eastern Oregon its presence is a pretty good sign of wrong kind of grazing.

Is it important? Yes, particularly in early spring on semiarid ranges where grass growth is sparse. Alfilaria is valuable in early spring and is well liked by stock until it dries up. Sheep like it real well. There's a funny thing about filaree. It contains a substance that is an antidote to strychnine so it's hard to poison squirrels where there is a good growth of alfilaria.

What does it look like? Alfilaria is an annual herb of the geranium family. The plant is a hairy weed with lacy leaves flat to the ground. It is branched from the base with reddish-colored stems that are low and spreading. Flowers are in clusters at the ends of branches arising between stem and leaves. Petals are pink and appear in very early spring. The sharp-pointed seeds resemble a heron's bill and when wetted and dried, bore into the ground, thus planting the seed and assuring a new crop for next year.

## Description:

Length of Life--Annual, 1 year.

Height--3 to 12 inches. Becomes prostrate (flat to ground) under grazing.

Growth Period--Earliest spring to early June. Flowers and seeds when weather becomes warm.

How does it Spread?--Entirely but adequately by seed.

Shape of Leaves--Divided and hairy with bracts (small leaves) at base.

Location of Leaves--At first in a basal rosette (ring) only; later, also opposite on the stems.



Note the way the beard twists when mature (2x).

Description: (continued)

Flowers--Geranium-like with five pink petals in small clusters toward end of branches. Outer parts are green and hairy.

Shape and Size of Seed--Seeds long and narrow, spindle-shaped with a tail 1 to 2 inches long, sharp-pointed and somewhat hairy at base.

Other Names--Filaree, redstem filaree, heronbill, pinclover, and storksbill.

How to Use it--Early in the spring when it is green and leafy. If there is much grass on range, be sure and get off the area early enough to let the grass make a good regrowth.

Does it look like anything else? No other plant resembles *Alfilaria* with the exception of small geranium plants that live more than one year and do not have finely divided leaves.



Bare open hillsides of eastern Oregon grow filaree. Sheep love it in the early spring.