

# Cusick's Bluegrass

(Poa cusickii)

Where does it grow? Cusick's bluegrass occurs at medium and high altitudes east of the Cascades. It is found on north slopes in some areas growing with Idaho fescue (Festuca idahoensis). Other grasses commonly associated with Cusick's bluegrass are: bluebunch wheatgrass (Agropyron spicatum), squirrel-tail (Sitanion hystrix) and prairie junegrass (Koeleria cristata).



Is it important? Yes, it is eaten by both cattle and sheep in the spring. It does not make up a large proportion of the plant composition and, therefore, does not individually provide an abundance of feed.

What does it look like? It is an erect, bluish green tufted perennial bunchgrass without rootstocks. It is usually about 1/2 to 2 feet high. The leaves are mostly basal, tightly rolled, with two prominent white veins running down the backside of the leaf and sheath. It looks like Idaho fescue, until examined carefully.

Description:

Length of Life--Perennial.

Height--Average about 16 inches but varies from 1/2 to 2 feet.

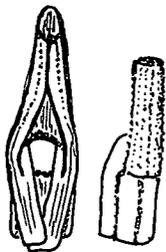
Bunch or sod--Bunch.

Growth period--Grows vigorously in spring and early summer. Usually sets seed in early May or June. It is later maturing than Sandberg bluegrass (Poa secunda) but earlier maturing than other associated perennial grasses.

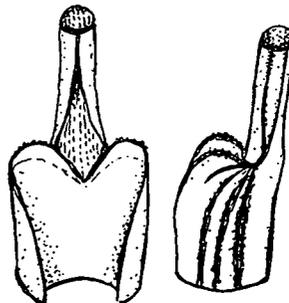
How does it spread--Entirely by seed.

Location and shape of leaves--Concentrated at the base. Leaf blades are usually folded and appear bristle-like. They are relatively soft to touch, sharp-pointed at the tip, rough on the margins and ridged on the back where folded.

Does it look like anything else? Yes, Idaho fescue. Idaho fescue has a sharp shoulder at the collar, very dark brown or black roots, and a minute flat ligule. Cusick's bluegrass has no pronounced shoulder and is tapered at the collar. The ligule is conspicuous and somewhat pointed. The roots are light brown.



Cusick's bluegrass



Idaho fescue