

RIPGUT BROME

Bromus diandrus

Grass Family (Poaceae)

DESCRIPTION

Ripgut brome frequently infests coastal dunes, grasslands, and open, disturbed sites.

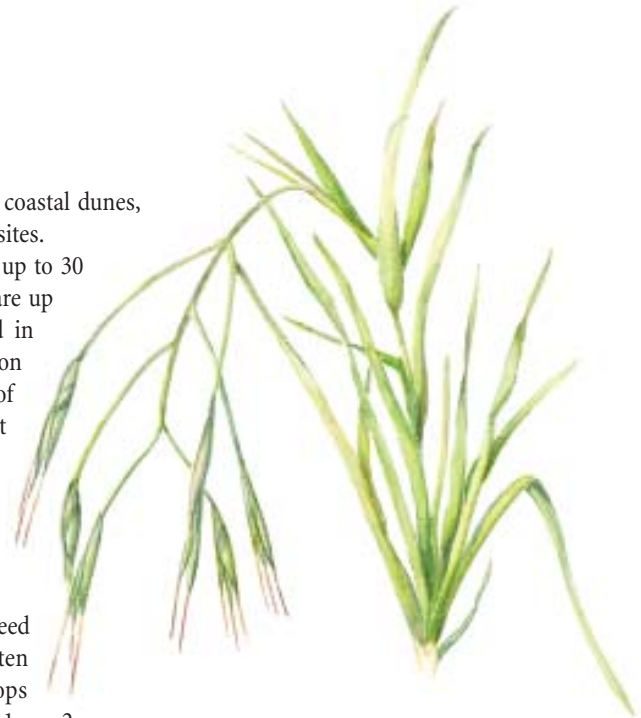
The slender stems can grow up to 30 inches tall. The flat leaf blades are up to a quarter-inch wide, covered in fine hairs, and slightly jagged on the margins. The swollen nodes of the stems distinguish ripgut brome from the native purple needlegrass. Ripgut brome has fibrous roots.

REPRODUCTION

Ripgut brome reproduces by seed only. The branched and often drooping inflorescence develops March–June, and consists of 1 or 2 spikelets with stiff, reddish or purple-tipped awns up to 2 inches long. Seed production is high, with a single plant capable of producing up to a thousand seeds. Seeds are usually wind-dispersed and can travel long distances, but they can also become attached to clothing. Germination occurs between November and April. Seeds can persist for up to 5 years.

IMPACT

Dense stands of dead plant material make this grass very prone to fire during summer drought. In addition, the long, stiff awns are known to cause injury to wildlife. Like many invasive annual grasses, ripgut brome prevents native perennial species from becoming reestablished. For example, research indicates that it outcompetes native oak seedlings for water stored in the soil by means of early germination, sheer volume of numbers, and deep roots.



KEY FACTORS

- u High seed production.
- u Seed longevity up to 5 years.

TREATMENT OPTIONS

- u **Pull** individual plants or small patches by hand in early spring before seeds are ripe. The optimum time for this is when seeds are hanging but while they still contain a milky substance.
- u **Mow or weed whip** larger infestations. Cut the grass to about 2 inches, making sure you take off the bolting crown. Mowing is usually done from late March to early April before seeds mature.

FOLLOW-UP

Practitioners report considerable success using manual and mechanical methods to eradicate ripgut brome, but sites previously infested by this grass are vulnerable to invasion by species

such as annual fescue (*Vulpia bromoides*), a very dominant grass that goes to seed quickly. Therefore follow-up not only includes removing any overlooked seedlings but also checking for new invasive species.

DISPOSAL

Pulled or cut vegetation can be piled on-site as long as the seeds are still immature and produce

a milky substance. Alternatively, the grass can be composted.

INTERESTING FACTS

Ripgut brome is native to parts of Europe, including the Mediterranean, and is thought to have become widely established in California as early as the late 1800s. Cattle will eat the grass early in the season when leaves are still tender.

Notes