

Invasive Plants in Pennsylvania

Rough Bluegrass

Poa trivialis



Joseph M. DiTomaso, UC Davis
www.forestryimages.org

Background:

Rough bluegrass was most likely brought to the United States by early settlers, but may have also been introduced more recently in lawn seed. Although it is occasionally used as a turf grass in poorly drained, shaded sites and for pasturage in marshlands, it is regarded more often as a serious lawn and forage weed.

Range:

Native to temperate regions of Eurasia, rough bluegrass can now be found throughout the northern half of the United States.

Description:

This perennial grass is generally nondescript, lacking easily identifiable characteristics. Its leaves are shiny, broad and tapering, with very rough sheaths. The slender, coarse stems grow to about two feet in height, topped with a loose, whorled, branched panicle of green-purple flowers.



Rasbak
www.commons.wikimedia.org

Habitat:

Rough bluegrass can be found in meadows, open woodlands, prairies and disturbed sites. It tolerates shade and a large range of soil moisture, but is drought sensitive. Optimum soils are nutrient rich (eutrophic), drained, cool and slightly acid to neutral.

Biology and Spread:

Rough bluegrass spreads both by seed and vegetatively. Seeds can easily contaminate seed mixes or soil material. Rough bluegrass possesses stolons that creep along the soil surface, forming new plants. It spreads fastest during cool weather, especially in shaded areas.

Ecological Threat:

This species is aggressive, capable of successfully outcompeting native species. It decreases overall diversity and alters species composition. It reduces total annual production of forage in pastures.



Rasbak
www.commons.wikimedia.org

How to Control this Species:

Control of rough bluegrass in mixed stands is extremely difficult. Prevention and early eradication is key. Be careful when importing seed or soil from potentially infested sites to avoid introduction of this species. There is never a good reason to plant this species intentionally.

Physical

Small infestations can be controlled by hand pulling and digging. Care must be taken to remove all root material.

Chemical

In mixed stands with native species, spot treatments with glyphosate can be effective at reducing populations if they are detected early and occur in limited areas.

Once rough bluegrass is established, aggressive herbicides will be necessary.

Grass-specific herbicides may be used if impact to native grasses is little or unlikely.



James Lindsey, Ecology of Commanster
www.commonswikimedia.org

Look-A-Likes:

Rough bluegrass resembles many other grass species, especially those in the genus *Poa*, which contains both native and non-native species.



Joseph M. DiTomaso, UC Davis
www.forestryimages.org

References:

Michigan State University Extension:

http://fis.msue.msu.edu/extension_documents/2011RSB.pdf

USGS Nonindigenous Aquatic Species Database:

<http://nas.er.usgs.gov>

For More Information:

DCNR Invasive Species Site: <http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/conservationscience/invasivespecies/index.htm>

US Forest Service Invasive Plant Field Guide:

http://na.fs.fed.us/pubs/misc/ip/ip_field_guide.pdf

National Park Service Plant Invaders of Mid-Atlantic Natural Areas:

<http://www.nps.gov/plants/alien/pubs/midatlantic/midatlantic.pdf>