

Weed Information Sheet:

smooth brome

Bromus inermis

Identification:

Poaceae (Grass family)

Abundant Perennial graminoid

Height: 18-30" **Width:** 10"-∞

Leaf Arrangement: alternate

Flower: Yellow, Green

Blooms: Late spring to Early

Fruit: Grain

Fall Color: Green

Blades on this grass are alternately arranged, generally growing about 1/2 inch wide and up to 12 inches long. The upper surface of blades are hairless and grayish-blue in color, while the lower surface is green. A key identifying feature of brome grass is the 'w'-shaped watermark on the blade, located between the collar and leaf tip. Flowers and seeds develop on open, drooping panicles by early summer, each seedhead containing 7-10 tan seed spikelets. Ligule is short and membranous.



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Bromus inermis

AKA: Hungarian brome



Description & Impact:

Smooth brome is a cool-season, perennial grass from Eurasia that can get up to 3.5 feet tall and grows in full sun areas of old fields, pastures, roadside, railroads and disturbed sites. A sod-forming grass, smooth brome spreads readily by seed and rhizomatous growth, thereby outcompeting warm season, native prairie grass species. Although this grass has been widely used in conservation seed mixes for wildlife nesting and erosion control, some states no longer use it due to the aggressive nature.

Control Methods:

Cultural: Smooth brome is discouraged by intensive early spring mowing or grazing, spring prescribed burns and low fertility. For the most effectiveness, mowing and burn timing should coincide with just before the grass goes to flower. Several consecutive years of spring burns may be required. A dual-method of control employing mowing or burning, followed by herbicide application, can be very effective. Avoid fertilizing areas with smooth brome infestation, as high nitrogen inputs will promote vegetative growth.

Manual digging of small populations can be done but not recommended, as the extensive network of rhizomes presents a high risk of leaving behind rhizome fragments to re-sprout at a later date.

Herbicide: A grass-specific herbicide (Poast®, Perspective®) can be used to treat smooth brome on sites mixed with desirable broadleaf plant populations. With proper application, grass-specific herbicides should not harm sedges, forbs or woody plants in the area. Best applied in spring or late fall when native warm-season grasses are dormant. Foliar application with a non-selective glyphosate at 2% active ingredient (a.i.) can also be used for areas with have fewer desirable species, but consideration should be taken to reduce potential for drift. Always apply herbicide according to instructions on the product label.

Native Alternatives:

The spread of perennial, cool season grasses like smooth brome can be controlled with strong competition from a suite of native grasses and other native plants with fibrous root structures. For tolerant, clumping native grasses, try little bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*), big bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii*), and switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*).

Citations: