

Canada bluegrass

Poa compressa

Description

Introduced to North America as a forage plant possibly in the late 1800s.

Habit

Rhizomatous, slender, erect, perennial grass that grows 3/4 to 2 feet in height and produces both fertile and infertile shoots.

Leaves

Blades are up to 4 inches long, 4.5 mm across, and rather stiff; dull green or grayish blue in color, hairless or sparsely pubescent and flat or slightly twisted. Tips are hull-shaped. Leaf sheaths are grayish blue or dull green, somewhat flattened, hairless or sparsely pubescent. Terminates in open panicles.

Stems



Solitary or tufted with 4-6 alternate leaves along each fertile stem. Green or grayish blue in color, hairless, somewhat flattened and unbranched.

Flowers

Open panicle of spikelets, 4-6 mm long and 1.5 mm across, somewhat flattened and mostly grayish blue; each spikelet consists of a pair of glumes and 3-7 lemmas. Glumes are 1.5-2.5 mm long, oblong-lanceolate, curved, grayish blue, and longitudinally veined. Lemmas are 2-3 mm long, oblong-lanceolate, curved, light to medium green, and 3- or 5-veined. Lemmas are hairy along the lower half. Blooms during the summer, lasting about 1-2 weeks. Becomes tan as it matures.

Fruits and Seeds

1.5 mm long, ellipsoid grains that are grooved along one side and light tan to brown in color. Seeds remain viable in the seed bank for up to 4 years.

Habitat

Native to Europe. Found in fields, disturbed areas, pastures, roadsides, vacant lots, yards or gardens.

Reproduction

By seeds and rhizomes.

Similar

Kentucky bluegrass (*Poa compressa*) can be distinguished from *P. pratensis* and other *Poa* spp. by its flattened stem and its blue-green color. Also, the rhizomes of *P. compressa* originate below ground and turn downward, but those of *P. pratensis* start from above ground before turning downward.

Monitoring and Rapid Response

Hand pulling or careful hoeing can be effective in spring or early summer before seeds set. Use of herbicides is not typically recommended as they occur in mixed stands together with native species. However, glyphosate or atrazine can be used in open areas with caution. Burning can be effective in late spring when plants are 1-2 months old.

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