Selected Common Grasses of Humboldt County

A Guide for Identification of Grasses with Their Associated Forage Values
This booklet has been provided by the Humboldt County Resource Conservation District, with support from the Humboldt County Headwaters Fund. Partners in development of this booklet include USDA – NRCS, and University of California Cooperative Extension.

This booklet is designed to help agricultural producers with identification of common grasses in pastures or rangeland settings. It is not intended to be inclusive of all grass species found in Humboldt County.

Grasses can be very difficult and challenging to identify, but don’t despair!

If you need assistance identifying grasses you encounter on your farm or ranch, you can contact:

**UCCE Humboldt**
707-445-7351

**Humboldt County Resource Conservation District**
707-786-9766

**NRCS Eureka Field Office**
707-444-9708

May 2015

Created by F. Tjarnstrom, HCRCD and J. Stackhouse, UCCE

Graphic design by Carson Park Design

Printed on recycled paper

**Aegilops cylindrica**
jointed goatgrass

Annual, tufted (clumped); grows to 20 inches tall

---

**Agrostis stolonifera**
creeping bentgrass

Perennial, rhizomatous, forms sod; grows to 5 feet tall

---

**FORAGE VALUE**

*Little to no value at all stages.*

---

*Good to Fair*

---

*Good to Fair*

---

*Fair to Poor*
**Aira caryophyllea**  
silver hairgrass

Annual, tufted (clumped); grows to 10 inches tall

**FORAGE VALUE**

*Little to no value at all stages.*

---

**Alopecurus geniculatus**  
marsh or water foxtail

Perennial, tufted (clumped); grows to 3.5 feet tall

---

**Trevor James**

---

**Max Licher**
**Anthoxanthum odoratum**

sweet vernalgrass

Perennial, tufted (clumped); grows to 24 inches tall

---

**Arrhenatherum elatius**

tall oatgrass

Perennial, tufted (clumped); grows to 6.5 feet tall

---

**FORAGE VALUE**

*Little to no value at all stages.*

---

*Fair*

*Poor*
**Avena barbata**  
slender oat

Annual, tufted (clumped); grows to 4 feet tall

---

**Avena fatua**  
wild oat

Annual, tufted (clumped); grows to 4.5 feet tall

---

---

---
**Briza maxima**  
quaking grass or rattlesnake grass

Annual, tufted (clumped); grows to 32 inches tall

**FORAGE VALUE**

*Little to no value at all stages.*

---

**Bromus carinatus**  
California brome

Perennial, tufted (clumped); grows to 4 feet tall

**FORAGE VALUE**

- Excellent
- Excellent
- Poor

© 2012 Jean Pawek
**Bromus catharticus**  
rescue grass

Perennial, tufted (clumped); grows to 6.5 feet tall

![Bromus catharticus](image)

**FORAGE VALUE**

- Good
- Good
- Poor

---

**Bromus diandrus**  
ripgut brome

Annual, tufted (clumped) or solitary; grows to 36 inches tall

![Bromus diandrus](image)

**FORAGE VALUE**

- Excellent
- Excellent
- Poor

---

Sheldon Navie  
*Br. Alfred Brousseau, Saint Mary’s College*
**Bromus hordeaceus (aka B. mollis)**

soft brome

Annual, tufted (clumped) or solitary; grows to 32 inches tall

---

**Bromus inermis**

smooth brome

Perennial, rhizomatous, forms sod; grows to 4 feet tall

---
**Bromus tectorum**  
*cheatgrass*

Annual, tufted (clumped) or solitary; grows to 3 feet tall

---

**Calamagrostis canadensis**  
*bluejoint*

Perennial, tufted (clumped) with creeping rhizomes; grows to 4.5 feet tall

---

**FORAGE VALUE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plant</th>
<th>Good to Fair</th>
<th>Good to Fair</th>
<th>Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Bromus tectorum</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Calamagrostis canadensis</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Calamagrostis rubescens**

pine reedgrass or pinegrass

Perennial, tufted (clumped) rhizomatous; grows to 44 inches tall

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FORAGE VALUE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Grass Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image2.png" alt="Grass Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image3.png" alt="Grass Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Cynodon dactylon**

bermudagrass

Perennial, rhizomatous and stoloniferous, forms mats; grows to 20 inches tall

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FORAGE VALUE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image4.png" alt="Grass Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image5.png" alt="Grass Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good to Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image6.png" alt="Grass Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Cynosurus cristatus
crested dogstail grass

Perennial, tufted (clumped); grows to 32 inches tall

FORAGE VALUE

Little to no value at all stages.

Cynosurus echinatus
bristly dogstail grass

Annual, tufted (clumped); grows to 28 inches tall

FORAGE VALUE

Little to no value at all stages.
**Dactylis glomerata**  
*orchardgrass*  
Perennial, tufted (clumped); grows to 4 feet tall

**Danthonia californica**  
*California oatgrass*  
Perennial, tufted (clumped); grows to 3.5 feet tall
**Deschampsia cespitosa**
tufted hairgrass
Perennial, tufted (clumped); grows to 4 feet tall

**Deschampsia elongata**
slender hairgrass
Perennial, tufted (clumped); grows to 3.5 feet tall

---

**FORAGE VALUE**

- **Excellent**
- **Good**
- **Fair**

---

© 2011 Margo Bors
© 2003 Steve Matson

© 2008 Keir Morse
[www.creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/](http://www.creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/)
**Elymus elymoides**  
squirreltail  
Perennial, tufted (clumped); grows to 24 inches tall  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FORAGE VALUE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="37x322" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="37x322" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="37x322" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Elymus glaucus**  
blue wildrye  
Perennial, tufted (clumped); grows to 5 feet tall  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FORAGE VALUE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="37x322" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="37x322" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="37x322" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Festuca arundinacea**  
* tall fescue  
Perennial, tufted (clumped) sometimes rhizomatous; grows to 5 feet tall

---

**Festuca californica**  
* California fescue  
Perennial, tufted (clumped); grows to 5 feet tall
**Festuca idahoensis**  
Idaho fescue  
Perennial, tufted (clumped); grows to 3.5 feet tall

**Festuca occidentalis**  
western fescue  
Perennial, tufted (clumped); grows to 32 inches tall
**Festuca perennis**
Italian ryegrass
Annual sometimes perennial, tufted (clumped); grows to 40 inches tall

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FORAGE VALUE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1.jpg" alt="Grass Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image2.jpg" alt="Grass Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image3.jpg" alt="Grass Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good to Fair</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Glyceria striata [aka: G. elata]**
fowl mannagrass
Perennial, tufted (clumped); grows to 5 feet tall

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FORAGE VALUE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image4.jpg" alt="Grass Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image5.jpg" alt="Grass Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image6.jpg" alt="Grass Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Holcus lanatus**  
velvet grass  
Perennial, tufted (clumped); grows to 3.5 feet tall

**FORAGE VALUE**  
- Fair

**Hordeum brachyantherum**  
meadow barley  
Perennial, tufted (clumped); grows to 40 inches tall

**FORAGE VALUE**  
- Good
- Good
- Poor
**Hordeum jubatum**  
foxtail barley

Perennial, tufted (clumped); grows to 30 inches tall

---

**Koeleria macrantha**  
prairie Junegrass

Perennial, tufted (clumped); grows to 24 inches tall

---

**FORAGE VALUE**

**Hordeum jubatum**  
Little to no value at all stages.

---

**FORAGE VALUE**

**Koeleria macrantha**

Excellent  
Excellent  
Good to Fair

---
**Lolium perenne**  
perennial ryegrass

Perennial, tufted (clumped); grows to 40 inches tall

---

**Melica bulbosa**  
oniongrass

Perennial, tufted (clumped); grows to 3.5 feet tall

---
**Nassella pulchra**  
*purple needlegrass*  
Perennial, tufted (clumped); grows to 3.5 feet tall

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FORAGE VALUE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1" alt="Grass" /> Good</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Phalaris aquatica**  
*Harding grass*  
Perennial, tufted (clumped) with short rhizomes; grows to 6.5 feet tall

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FORAGE VALUE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image2" alt="Grass" /> Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image3" alt="Grass" /> Fair</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

awns can cause injuries
**Phalaris arundinacea**
reed canary grass

Perennial, rhizomatous; grows to 7 feet tall

**Phleum pratense**
timothy

Perennial, tufted (clumped); grows to 4 feet tall
**Poa bulbosa**
bulbous bluegrass

Perennial, forms sod; grows to 24 inches tall

---

**Poa pratensis**
Kentucky bluegrass

Perennial, rhizomatous, forms sod; grows to 3.5 feet tall

---
## Poa secunda
### Sandberg bluegrass
Perennial, tufted (clumped); grows to 18 inches tall

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FORAGE VALUE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1" alt="Grass" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

## Polypogon monspeliensis
### rabbitsfoot grass
Annual, tufted (clumped); grows to 32 inches tall

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FORAGE VALUE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image2" alt="Grass" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| ![Grass](image3) | Fair |

*Little to no value at all stages.*
**Rytidosperma penicillatum**

hairy oatgrass

Perennial, tufted (clumped) with creeping rhizomes; grows to 36 inches tall

---

**Taeniatherum caput-medusae**

medusahead

Annual, tufted (clumped) or solitary; grows to 24 inches tall

---
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AWN</td>
<td>a slender hair or bristle that arises from the back of bract structures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AXIS</td>
<td>the central stem of an inflorescence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CULM</td>
<td>the hollow stem of a grass plant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIBROUS</td>
<td>consisting of or containing mostly fibers; commonly used to describe branching root systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLORET</td>
<td>a subunit of a spikelet, includes bract structures that enclose flower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GLUMES</td>
<td>bracts at the base of a spikelet in grasses; most grasses have two glumes, some have one glume, a few have none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INFLORESCENCE</td>
<td>the flowering portion of a grass plant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RACHILLA</td>
<td>the unbranched central axis of a spikelet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RHIZOMES</td>
<td>underground, horizontal stems with scale-like leaves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RHIZOMATOUS</td>
<td>consisting of rhizomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPIKELET</td>
<td>the unit of the grass inflorescence, consisting of glumes and one or more florets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STOLON</td>
<td>a horizontal, above-ground modified stem with leaves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TUFTED</td>
<td>in bunches or clumps</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Humboldt County Resource Conservation District

The HCRCD is a non-regulatory organization that works in voluntary cooperation with landowners, residents, and community groups. We provide information, technical assistance and funding to implement practices that improve and protect water quality and natural habitat on private lands.