

Cheatgrass - Downy brome (*Bromus tectorum*)



Seedlings



Mature Plants



Thatch Layer

The term 'cheatgrass' is often used to describe various annual brome species. Locally, cheatgrass refers to downy brome. Cheatgrass species follow a winter annual life cycle - seed germinates following late summer or early fall moisture (some spring emergence can occur as well), becomes dormant in winter, and is the first grass to green-up in the spring. Cheatgrass typically sets seed in May and dries down by July. At maturity, the abundant and very prickly seed heads become a nuisance to hikers, pets and livestock. Dense stands of dry plant material create a fine-fuel source for frequent summer wildfires in the western United States.

The most common herbicide for controlling cheatgrass is imazapic (Plateau/Panoramic). Treatments should be applied in the fall either pre-emergent or early post emergent (prior to the tillering stage of the grass). Glyphosate (Roundup and others) can be applied at low rates in the winter when perennial grasses are dormant for selective control. On-going research has found that Matrix has shown effective control with the advantage of working beyond the tillering stage, making the timing of use of Matrix less essential than imazapic.

No insect biocontrol agents are available for control of cheatgrass. Grazing in the early spring when the grass is palatable can suppress seed head production, but can also be injurious to desirable perennial grasses at that time.

Hand pulling or tillage (where feasible) is effective if conducted prior to seed set. Mowing is marginally effective, as re-growth will occur and plants will set seed from a reduced height.

