

Common Peppergrass

Lepidium densiflorum Schrad.

Alternate Names

Peppergrass, poor man's pepper, prairie peppergrass, green-flowered peppergrass, wild tongue-grass

Synonyms

Lepidium apetalum Willd.

Description

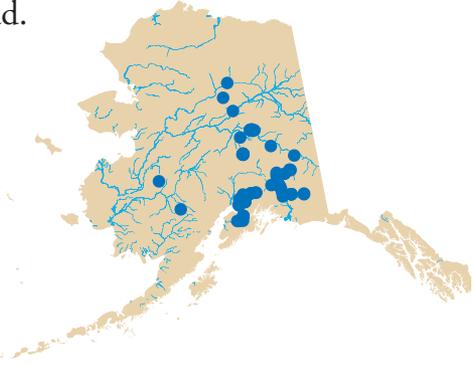
Common peppergrass is an annual plant with a basal rosette of toothed leaves that are 1–4 inches long and $\frac{3}{4}$ –1 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches wide, growing from a short taproot. The flowering stem usually has numerous branches and is 4–20 inches high with alternate leaves. The flowers are small and inconspicuous. Seed pods are $\frac{1}{16}$ to $\frac{1}{8}$ of an inch long, with 9–15 pods produced for every half-inch of flowering stem. The high density of pods gives the plant a distinctive appearance that facilitates field identification.



US Geological Survey photo by Chris McKee

Similar Species

Common peppergrass can be distinguished from other *Lepidium* species in Alaska by having reduced or absent petals. Garden cress (*L. sativum* L.) is another exotic species that is closely related to common peppergrass, but the leaves of garden cress are dissected into narrow segments, its petals are reddish-white and twice as long as the sepals, and its pods are $\frac{3}{16}$ – $\frac{5}{16}$ inches long with a deep notch at the top.



Management

Common peppergrass plants are easily pulled up by hand, although several weedings may be necessary to eliminate plants germinating from buried seeds (Densmore et al. 2001). Multiple herbicide applications can also provide effective control.

Notes

The immature seedpods have a pungent, peppery taste, giving the plant its common name. The leaves have been chewed for the treatment of headaches. An infusion of common peppergrass has been used in the treatment of kidney problems.