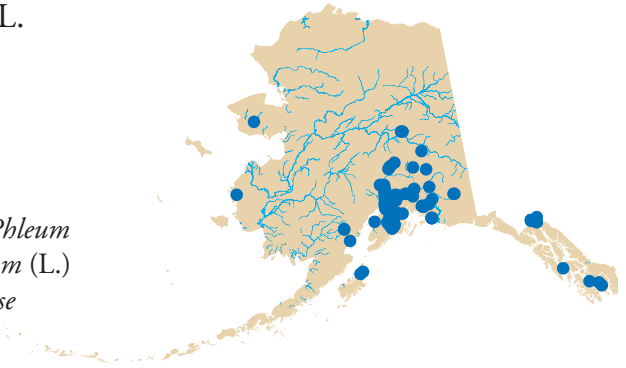
Common Timothy

Phleum pratense L.



Alternate Names
timothy

Synonyms
Phleum nodosum L., *Phleum pratense* L. var. *nodosum* (L.) Huds., *Phleum pratense* L. ssp. *nodosum* (L.) Arcang.

Description
Common timothy is a short-lived perennial bunchgrass with flowers borne in compact, cylindrical panicles that are spike-like, dense, and several times longer than wide. The horned spikelets are distinct. Stems are erect, purple or brown at the nodes, and often bulbous at the base. Leaf blades are flat, ⅛–¼ of an inch wide, and smooth to slightly rough; sheaths are smooth. The spike is 1–5 inches long, very condensed, cylindrical, and ¼–⅜ of an inch thick. Spikelets are one-flowered, compressed, and green or often purple-tipped, and they turn dull brown with age.

USDA Forest Service photo by Dave Powell

Similar Species
Alpine timothy (*Phleum alpinum* L.) is a common native plant at higher elevations in Alaska. The panicle is less than half as long as that of common timothy, and the uppermost leaf sheath is inflated.

Management

Hand pulling can be used for common timothy. Frequent cutting or mowing can weaken overall plant health (Rutledge and McLendon 1996). Common timothy stands also become weak under continuous grazing (GRIN 2004).

Notes

Common timothy comes from Europe but is widely naturalized in North America. It was first introduced into the U.S. in 1720 by Timothy Hansen, giving the plant its common name.

XID Services photo by Richard Old

Inflorescence of common timothy.

XID Services photo by Richard Old