

Have You Seen a New Green Grass?

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Looking along the paths or roads through your woods could be a new invasive, noxious weed. It's just a little lighter green and perhaps a little taller than what has always been with us...but...stoop down and take a second look. False brome (*Brachypodium sylvaticum*) is creeping rapidly through the forests of the Willamette Valley.

Unfortunately, we recently discovered false brom on our property. We were able to confirm it by visiting the Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) office in Oregon City. There we were able to look at specimens of false brome and discuss plant identification with one of their knowledgeable staff members. Here are some tips from the SWCD on identifying and managing this benign looking but very real threat.

What does it look like? False brome is a grass species that grows up to three feet in height (including the long seed head stem). It is characterized by bright green drooping leaves. The stems and leaves of false brome are hairy. The leaves of false brome also have a single row of hairs along their margin. The flowering spikelets

are attached directly to the flowering stalk, allowing it to be distinguished from other local look-a-likes.

Why should I worry about false brome? As a fast growing noxious weed, false brome displaces the native vegetation that is needed by wildlife for food and shelter. Sites invaded by false brome have increased fire hazard due to a buildup of thatch in infested areas. This thatch also results in reduced forest regeneration, due to increased rodent predation on young tree seedlings.

How does false brome spread? In our area, false brome seeds are typically spread by people through their shoes, clothing and equipment contaminated with seed. False brome can spread with pets and wildlife as these sticky seeds get caught in fur. Streams and rivers also carry seed downstream during seasonal flooding.

How do I control false brome on my property? False brome is a pest that is very difficult to contain and control. Like other grasses, cutting



and burning are ineffective. Hand removal methods can be used for small infestations, but require frequent follow up to achieve control. Apply false brome control efforts throughout the year. To prevent seed set, mow plants in June or July (if possible) and follow up with an herbicide treatment in late August through October, as plants begin to die back. Choose herbicide products that contain glyphosate and are approved for use around water.

Before beginning an herbicide regime, contact the Weed Wise Program or consult the Pacific Northwest Weed Management Handbook (<http://pnwhandbooks.org/weed/>). To confirm your suspicion, you could take a sample in to the office of Clackamas Soil and Water Conservation District at 221 Molalla Avenue in Oregon City. They also provide a colorful brochure and qualified personnel to help. ■