

SLENDER FALSE BROME

Brachypodium sylvaticum

What is slender false brome?

Slender false brome (*Brachypodium sylvaticum*) is an invasive grass, and one of New York State's lesser known invasive species. This species often goes undetected because there are many other grasses that appear similar and it can be difficult to identify. This attractive perennial grass forms distinctive bunches of arching, lime-green leaves, as seen at the right.

Slender false brome can tolerate a wide range of habitats and can quickly crowd out native species. It is especially competitive in shady or drought stricken areas, as shown in the photo to the lower right. Seeds are easily spread by people, wildlife and equipment.

In the Pacific Northwest, this invasive species has proven to be very aggressive and has effectively changed the landscape in western Oregon, and parts of California and Washington.



Boot-high clumps of flat, arching leaf blades $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch wide are bright green into the fall. Fine hairs are found along the stem and leaf edge.
Photo: Steve Young

Why is it a problem?

Slender false brome can outcompete existing vegetation, including threatened and endangered species. It can even prevent tree seedling establishment and is of very low value as food for wildlife. It can harm populations of mammals, insects, lizards and snakes and even song birds by altering food sources. This plant is self-fertilizing and can produce hundreds of seeds per plant.

Brachypodium has exhibited explosive spread and aggressive population expansion in portions of New York, threatening diversity in botanically unique areas such as the Bergen Swamp in western NY. The plant is also found in high use areas such as Taughannock Falls State Park in the Finger Lakes Region, making containment difficult.



Photo: Oregon False Brome Working Group

Where is it located?

As of December 2016, slender false brome has been found in just a few locations in New York: the Bergen Swamp in Genesee County, several areas near Ithaca in Tompkins County, a site in Onondaga County, and one site in Dutchess County near Wappingers Falls (see www.nyimapinvasives.org). However, because this plant is so non-distinct, it has likely been undetected or misidentified in western and central New York for years. It thrives in many terrestrial environments, including the shade of forest floors, pastures, and fields at various elevations.

Slender false brome has spread rapidly throughout portions of western Oregon and the Pacific Northwest. It is important to know if you may be in an area with slender false brome, but it is also good practice to brush off boots and clothing before leaving any trail or natural area.

How does it spread?

The seeds of slender false brome can be spread easily by attaching to shoes, clothing, and vehicles. Seeds may be trapped in mud lodged in boot or bike tire treads. Wildlife, especially birds and small mammals can move seeds. Seeds are often dispersed long distances by logging activities, roadside maintenance, and recreational activities. If seeds are transported to a different area, a new infestation could occur.

What are we doing about it?

In 2016, New York formed the Brachypodium Working Group to bring together PRISM leaders, state agencies, conservation groups, and botanists to collaborate on ideas regarding management approaches, research needs, and control options and on how to increase awareness of the species. There are no approved biocontrol agents available, so delineating populations, implementing effective management activities, and understanding the risks of spread are essential.



Fine hairs along the stem and leaf (left) edge. Long, drooping flowers/seed heads (center and right) with short or no stalk. Stems (right) grow far above the leaves. Mature flowers/seeds can be seen through October. Photo: Oregon False Brome Working Group

What can I do?

Prevention is always the best option. Since this species spreads by seed, cleaning boots, equipment, and machinery can help prevent further establishment. Small patches of slender false brome can be dug up in April and May, taking extra care to remove the whole root system. Mowing in June will inhibit seed production. For larger infestations, non-selective or grass-specific herbicides can be effective in some environments.

- Learn how to identify slender false brome and report infestations to your local Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISM) coordinator. Contact information can be found at the following address: www.dec.ny.gov/animals/47433.html.
- Infestations can also be reported to DEC at isinfo@dec.ny.gov. Be sure to include a photo of your observation!
- Enter observations of this and other invasive species into the iMap Invasive Species Database at www.nyimainvasives.org.
- Use boot brush stations at trailheads when available or bring your own brush to remove seeds from clothing and bike and boot treads.

Luckily, some infestations in New York are small enough to contain with proper management, while others will focus on preventing further spread. Species-specific control methods have proven effective, particularly in Oregon where infestations are widespread. In New York, slender false brome is a prohibited invasive species under 6 NYCRR Part 575, which means it cannot be bought, sold or introduced into the wild.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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