

Lowbush Blueberry Fact Sheet

Poverty Oat Grass

Danthonia spicata L. Beauv. ex Roem. & Schult.

Other names: Wire-grass, wild oat grass, poverty grass, old fog, bonnett grass, white horse, wild cat grass, June grass.

Description

Poverty oat grass is a tufted, perennial grass with a fibrous root system. The leaves are narrow (up to 3 mm wide) and 7-15 cm long. There is a noticeable tuft of hairs at the base of the leaf blade where it contacts the stem. Most of the leaves are short and curly and are found mostly around the base of the plant. The inflorescence is an open loose structure known as a panicle which can contain 1-50 florets. The spikelets have a long twisted, stiff projection known as an awn on the back of the floret. Environmental conditions have a significant effect on the growth of this weed. On dry, heavy soil this plant may often be less than 20 cm high, whereas in moist shady sites, it can grow as high as 70 cm.

Economic Importance

Poverty oat grass is one of the most abundant grasses in lowbush blueberry fields. It is found everywhere on poor and sterile soils and is a native perennial grass in meadows, old pastures and neglected fields. It has become abundant in blueberry fields originating from such fields. Because of its shallow root system, burning can provide significant control. However in mowed fields, the crown area is not controlled by pruning and more dense stands can be expected in mowed fields. In dense stands, poverty oat grass can make grey-green mats or sod and will interfere with growth of blueberry plants and harvesting.



Poverty Oat Grass



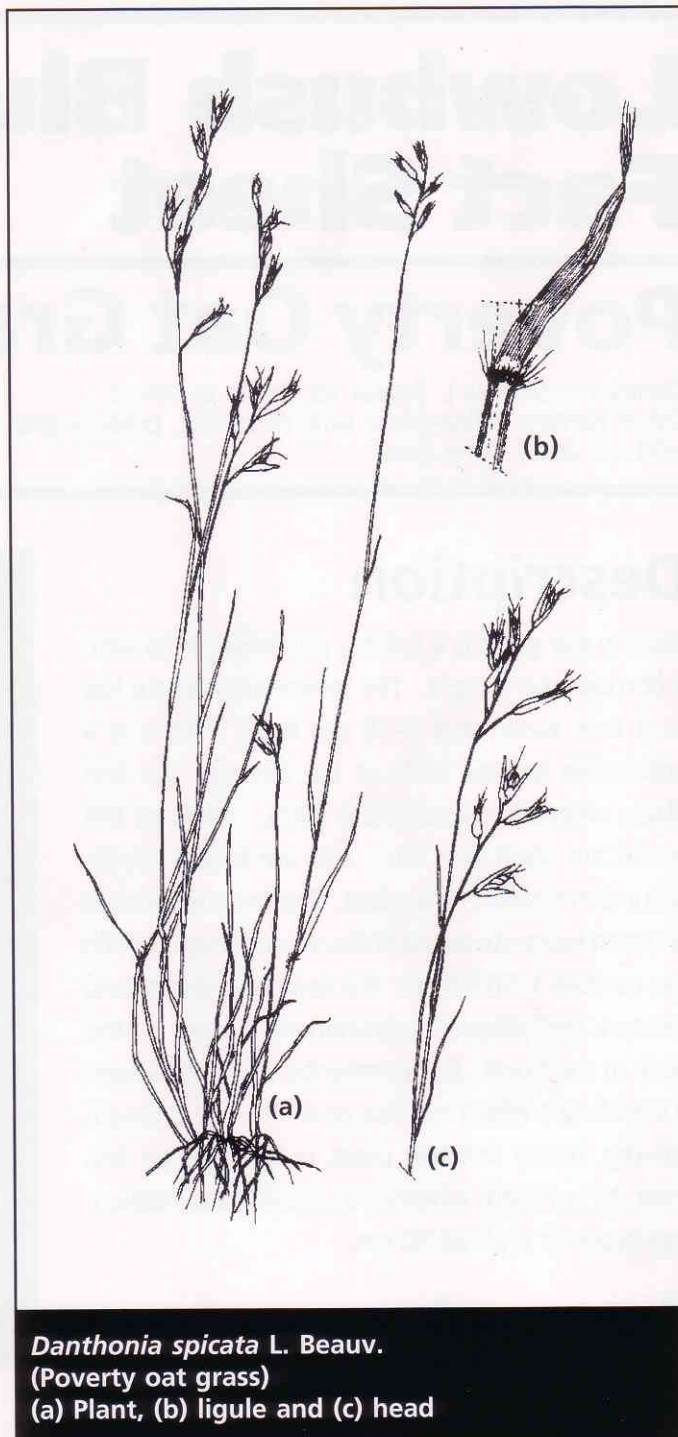


Life Cycle

Poverty oat grass is a perennial that regrows each year from the crown area and reproduces primarily by seed. Seedlings and regrowth from crowns appear in May, with flowering beginning in late July to September. Enlargement of clumps is slow, occurring at a rate of about 1-2 cm per year from tillering from basal offshoots. In burnt fields, the plants generally start from seedlings particularly in the crop year, at which time they become more noticeable. In mowed fields, plants originate from both seeds and regrowth from the crown.

Control Strategy

This species is fairly easy to control in lowbush blueberries. It can be controlled by currently registered treatments for grasses. Some control can be obtained from burning which kills the basal area from where the plant regrows each year. Mowing is ineffective as a control measure. As weed control programs shift to more selective herbicides that do not control grasses, this weed can be expected to increase in both frequency and density.



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