Monocot weeds

Because of natural variations within grasses and differences that occur under varying environments, the illustrations included herein are meant to be representative but not definitive. Users need to consider all of the information—seedhead, in-bud, ligule, collar, descriptive text, tips and distribution—to accurately identify a weed.

As you proceed, keep in mind that you should not rely on an individual characteristic to be conclusive, rather total the number of similar characteristics between the sample and the guide to help narrow the number of possibilities.

The monocot weed species illustrated herein were selected for their likelihood of appearing in turf and their latest reported distribution.

Identifying a monocot weed

Once a mature sample has been selected, check each of the listed plant parts as follows:

• seedhead—size, shape, openness and number, size and shape of branches and seeds

• in-bud—cut through a leaf stem and determine if it is folded or rolled

• ligule—remove a leaf from its stem and with a hand lens check the size, shape and texture

• collar—lay the leaf flat, underside up and check the size, shape and top and bottom edges

• tips—check for additional vegetative plant characteristics

• distribution—confirm that this weed species has been identified in your state

ANNUAL BLUEGRASS
aka Poa annua, poa

DIAGNOSTIC TIPS:
Very persistent self-seeding winter annual or biennial
Short, narrow leaf blades with parallel edges and boat-shaped tip
Some leaf blades wavy
Germinates in late summer/early fall
Shallow-rooted, dying under heat or moisture stress

STRUCTURAL CHARACTERISTICS:

Leaf in bud:
folded

Collar:
narrow
top pinched

Ligule:
medium pointed

DISTRIBUTION:

Indigenous states
MONOCOTS Annual

SANDBUR

**DIAGNOSTIC TIPS:**
A mostly prostrate, narrow-leafed summer annual that likes sandy soils.

Distinctive yellow seedhead contains 6-20 large, sharply-burred seeds.

Burred seeds can cause painful injury to unprotected feet or ankles.

**STRUCTURAL CHARACTERISTICS:**
- Leaf in bud: folded
- Collar: broad bottom pinched
- Ligule: hairy

**DISTRIBUTION:**
Indigenous states

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FOXTAIL BARLEY
aka squirreltail barley

**DIAGNOSTIC TIPS:**
A narrow-leafed prostrate summer annual.

Leaf blades coarse to touch, often with sparse, stiff hairs.

Seedhead is a single tufted spike.

Seed has a 2-3-inch-long hair at pointed end.

**STRUCTURAL CHARACTERISTICS:**
- Leaf in bud: folded
- Collar: broad bottom pinched
- Ligule: tall toothed

**DISTRIBUTION:**
Indigenous states
**MONOCOTS Annual**

**GOOSEGRASS**
aka silver crabgrass

A narrow-leafed dense prostrate summer annual

Leaf color is darker green than most annual monocots

Collar area has sparse long hairs

Seedhead has 2-13 branches which are white to silver in color

**DISTRIBUTION:**

- Indigenous states

**STRUCTURAL CHARACTERISTICS:**

- Leaf in bud: folded
- Collar: broad continuous
- Ligule: short toothed & divided

**BARNYARDGRASS**
aka billion dollargrass, watergrass

A very wide-bladed semi-prostrate summer annual

Stems may be branched at nodes and frequently bent upright

Seedhead has multiple short perpendicular branches

Seeds are coarse with short burrs

**DISTRIBUTION:**

- Indigenous states

**STRUCTURAL CHARACTERISTICS:**

- Leaf in bud: rolled
- Collar width: broad
- Ligule height: absent
CHEATGRASS
aka chess, rye bromegrass

A narrow-leafed, mostly erect winter annual
Underside of leaf is often hairy
Seedhead is open with multiple semi-erect branches carrying 1-4 seed clusters
Seeds look like cultivated wheat or rye

STRUCTURAL CHARACTERISTICS:

Leaf in bud: rolled
Collar: broad bottom pinched
Ligule: short toothed

DISTRIBUTION:

GREEN FOXTAIL
aka green bristlegrass

A wide-leafed mounded summer annual
Leaf blades are limp, bright green and sharply pointed
Stems bent upright at nodes
Seedhead cylindrical with tufted pale green seeds

STRUCTURAL CHARACTERISTICS:

Leaf in bud: rolled
Collar: narrow continuous
Ligule: hairy

DISTRIBUTION:

Indigenous states
LARGE CRABGRASS  
aka hairy fingergrass

A wide-bladed prostrate summer annual
Leaves are hairy on both surfaces with a prominent midrib
Older nodes are often branched and rooted where contacting soil
Seedhead open with 4-6 slender branches

RESCEUGRASS  
aka prairiegrass, rescue brome

A wide-leafed winter annual or biennial
Leaves are hairy at edges and on upper surface
Seedhead is open with bending slender side branches
Seed clusters look like cultivated wheat or rye

STRUCTURAL CHARACTERISTICS:

Leaf in bud: rolled
Collar: broad top pinched
Ligule: tall toothed & pointed

DISTRIBUTION:

Indigenous states
MONOCOTS Annual

SMOOTH CRABGRASS aka fingergrass
A narrow-leaved prostrate summer annual
Leaves are not hairy except sparsely haired in collar area
Stems branch at nodes, but do not root
Seedhead has 2-6 slender upright branches

STRUCTURAL CHARACTERISTICS:
- Leaf in bud: rolled
- Collar: broad bottom pinched
- Ligule: tall rounded

DISTRIBUTION:
- Indigenous states

STINKGRASS
A narrow-leaved annual
Leaves are dull on upper surface and glossy on underside
Collar area has sparse long hairs
Plant has a very disagreeable odor when cut or damaged

STRUCTURAL CHARACTERISTICS:
- Leaf in bud: rolled
- Collar: narrow continuous
- Ligule: hairy

DISTRIBUTION:
- Indigenous states
**WITCHGRASS**

An erect wide-bladed summer annual

Leaves are densely hairy on both surfaces

Emerging seedhead is fountain-like

Mature seedhead is large and very open with slender branches carrying single seeds

**STRUCTURAL CHARACTERISTICS:**

- **Leaf in bud:** rolled
- **Collar:** broad continuous
- **Ligule:** hairy

**DISTRIBUTION:**

- **Indigenous states**

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**YELLOW FOXTAIL**

An erect wide-bladed summer annual

Upper leaf surface has long hairs in collar area

Leaves are often slightly twisted in an open spiral

**STRUCTURAL CHARACTERISTICS:**

- **Leaf in bud:** rolled
- **Collar:** narrow top pinched
- **Ligule:** hairy

**DISTRIBUTION:**

- **Indigenous states**
**MONOCOTS Annual**

**DOWNY BROME**
aka *drooping bromegrass*

An erect narrow-bladed winter annual

Leaves have dense soft hairs on both surfaces

Seedhead is open with drooping branches

Seed clusters are tufted and look like cultivated wheat or rye

**STRUCTURAL CHARACTERISTICS:**
- Leaf in bud: rolled
- Collar: narrow bottom pinched
- Ligule: medium toothed & pointed

**DISTRIBUTION:**

- Indigenous states

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**FALL PANICUM**
aka *smooth witchgrass*

A very wide-bladed mostly prostrate summer annual

Leaves may be hairy on upper surface, are glossy beneath and sharply pointed

Stems branched at nodes and bent upright

Seedhead is open with multiple very slender branches

**STRUCTURAL CHARACTERISTICS:**
- Leaf in bud: rolled
- Collar: broad continuous
- Ligule height: hairy

**DISTRIBUTION:**

- Indigenous states
WILD OAT
aka wild oats
An erect wide-bladed annual
Plant often turns brown in summer as seed matures
Collar area has sparse short hairs
Stems are stiff
Seedhead is open with multiple branches carrying many single drooping seeds

STRUCTURAL CHARACTERISTICS:
- Leaf in bud: rolled
- Collar: narrow bottom pinched
- Ligule: tall toothed

DISTRIBUTION:
Indigenous states

SOUTHERN CRABGRASS
aka summergrass
A wide-bladed prostrate summer annual
Leaves may be hairy on upper surface
Stems will root at nodes
Collar area has sparse long hairs
Seedhead has 2-9 slender branches

STRUCTURAL CHARACTERISTICS:
- Leaf in bud: rolled
- Collar: broad
- Ligule: medium toothed & pointed

DISTRIBUTION:
Indigenous states