

-State Species Abstract-  
-Wyoming Natural Diversity Database-

*HELICTOTRICHON MORTONIANUM*  
ALPINE OATGRASS  
Family: Poaceae

Status:

US Fish & Wildlife Service: None.

Agency Status: None.

Heritage Rank:

Global: G4 State: S1

WYNDD Plant List: Disjunct (Medium conservation priority)

Description: Alpine oatgrass is a fibrous-rooted perennial bunchgrass with culms 10-20 cm tall. The leaves have narrow, inrolled blades (1.5-2 mm wide when unrolled), glabrous to pubescent sheaths, and ciliate-margined membranous ligules. The inflorescence is an erect, narrow, compact to loose panicle 2-5 cm long. Individual spikelets are 0-12 mm long and consist of 2 florets (the upper floret sterile) that are shorter than the membranous, scabrous-keeled glumes. Lemmas are lightly scabrous, lance-shaped, minutely bristle-toothed at the apex, and bear from the middle of their back a sharply bent and twisted awn 10-16 mm long. Anthers are 1.5-2.5 mm long (Cronquist et al. 1977; Hitchcock 1950; Scott 1997).

Similar Species: *Helictotrichon hookeri* has culms 15-45 cm long, flatter and wider leaf blades, panicles 5-10 cm long, and more than 3 florets per spikelet. *Danthonia* spp. have hairy ligules and awns emerging from the bitoothed tip of the lemma. *Avena* spp. are introduced annuals with wider leaf blades and open, drooping inflorescences (Dorn 1992).

Flowering/Fruiting Period: July-August.  
Reproduces by seed.

Distribution: Regional endemic of the southern Rocky Mountains in northeastern Utah (Uinta Range), central Colorado, and northern New Mexico. A single disjunct population occurs in the northeastern Wind River Range in Fremont County, Wyoming.

Habitat: In Wyoming, populations occur in alpine meadows dominated by *Geum rossii* turf on Precambrian crystalline rocks and alpine calcareous meadows.

Occurrences in Wyoming: Known from a single occurrence in Wyoming, first discovered in 1996, but not recognized until 1999.

Abundance: Not known, but presumed to be small.

Trends: Not known.

Protection status: Population occurs within the Fitzpatrick Wilderness Area and the potential Arrow Mountain Research Natural Area.

Threats: Not known.

Managed Areas: Occurs on Shoshone National Forest.

References:

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Author: Walter Fertig

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