

How do I get rid of cheatgrass in my yard?

SEED



EARLY ESTABLISHMENT



FLOWERING



SEED DEVELOPMENT



What is cheatgrass?

Cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*) is an invasive annual grass from Eurasia with severe ecological and economic impacts on shrub-steppe ecosystems of the Intermountain West. Its seeds are notorious for getting stuck in socks and shoes and pricking your skin (see photo). In the eastern Sierra, it comes up in the early spring and dies by late June, leaving a carpet-like cover of dry grass ripe for ignition. At lower elevations, it has initiated grass-fire cycles, which result in frequent wildfire that lead to loss of sagebrush species and high costs to society. In our region, it is still patchy but research has shown that under changing climate conditions, it is likely to spread to higher elevations. By removing it from your yard, you are helping stop it from spreading and becoming a problem.



Soil solarization

Methods of removal

There are several ways to get rid of cheatgrass, and their effectiveness and utility varies depending on how big the patch is, what stage of development the grass is in, and what else is growing around it. We have tested some non-toxic, low-tech methods of removal and summarized their strengths and weaknesses below. In our area, goat and sheep grazing has also been tested by BLM staff with variable results. It is recommended to graze plants as early as possible to prevent seed production (while plants are still green). A minimum of two treatments per year, two times per year is ideal. Hand-pulling should be done at the same stage, before seeds have developed. Mulching and soil solarization, on the other hand, can be done at any time. Soil solarization involves saturating the ground and covering it with a clear plastic tarp for a minimum of a month during the summer. All seeds will be killed (not just cheatgrass), so this is best done in a small area where native plants are not abundant. Mulching will, likewise, kill anything that you cover and would work best around manicured parts of your property.

Methods of eliminating cheatgrass from small patches in your yard

Treatment	Strengths	Weaknesses	Materials needed
Hand-pulling	Effectively reduces cheatgrass without any negative impacts on native species. Increases native forbs.	Tedious, time-consuming, needs on-going attention.	Nothing. Just patience.
Mulching	Effectively reduces cheatgrass after a single season	Eliminates all other annual plants too. Potentially high cost for materials, depending on the area of infestation.	Cardboard, wood chips or other mulch material
Soil solarization	Ability to completely eradicate cheatgrass (both seeds and plants); Effective after a single season	Eliminates all other plants and most seeds. It would be tedious and impractical over a large area.	Plastic sheeting, water.