

# BLACK OATGRASS (*Piptochaetium avenaceum*)

Grass Family (Poaceae)

## Plant Species of Concern

State Rank: S1 (critically imperiled), Global Rank: G5 (secure)

### SIGNIFICANCE

Black oatgrass has been given a proposed status of Endangered on the Plants of Special Concern in Pennsylvania list by the Pennsylvania Biological Survey and the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. It is currently known to PNDI from only a single population in the state, although it has been documented historically at a number of locations, primarily in southeastern Pennsylvania.

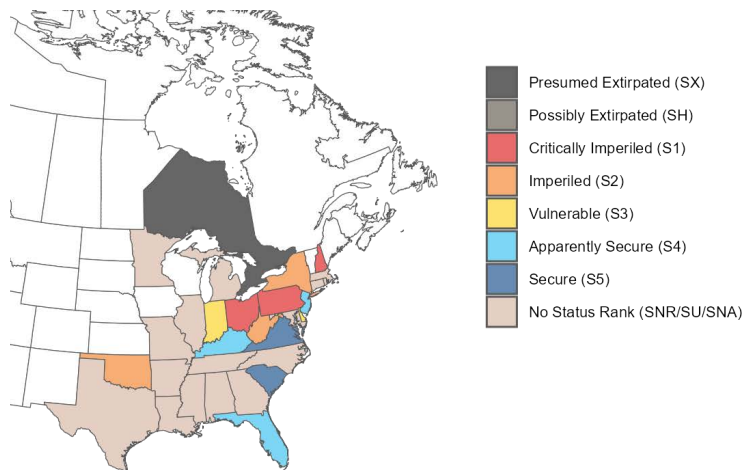
### DESCRIPTION

The species is a perennial herb that grows to three feet in height. The leaves are very slender and elongate. The most distinctive feature of the plant are the twisted, hair-like, two or three inch long projections, or awns, that protrude from the individual flowers in the flowering cluster. The flowering cluster is evident in late spring and early summer. When flowering or fruiting, it is one of the most easily recognized grasses in the state.

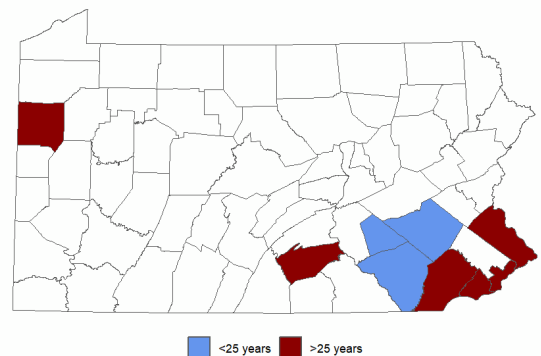


### North American State/Province Conservation Status

Map by NatureServe 2025



Blackseed Needlegrass (*Piptochaetium avenaceum*)



### HABITAT

The species inhabits a variety of habitats throughout its range, such as dry woods, rocky slopes, outcrops, and clearings. At the single known population in Pennsylvania, the

plants grow in dry, open, woods on a south-facing, shale slope.

### RANGE

Black oatgrass occurs throughout much of eastern, particularly the more southern portions, of North America. In Pennsylvania, the historical range of the species is mainly in the southeastern quarter of the state.

### REFERENCES

- NatureServe. 2025. NatureServe Explorer [web application] NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available at <https://explorer.natureserve.org> (Accessed: May 8, 2025)
- Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources web site ([www.dcnr.state.pa.us](http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us))
- Rhoads, A.F. and T.A. Block. 2000. The plants of Pennsylvania: an illustrated manual. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, PA
- Rhoads, A.F. and W.M. Klein, Jr.. 1993. The vascular flora of Pennsylvania: annotated checklist and atlas. American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, PA

