

## ROEMER'S FESCUE *Festuca roemerii*

**Market:** Upland mesic, fine leaf textured, bunchgrass adapted to Coast Range, Willamette Valley, Puget Lowlands and the Western Cascades. Recommended for upland restoration, erosion control on cut slopes, open rocky meadows, sloping margins of transitional zones associated with dry prairies. Roemer's fescue exhibits drought tolerance and is an excellent candidate for groundcover in vineyards and orchards where slow non-competitive, perennial vegetative growth is desired. Foliage is usually more or less blue-green or gray-green, and the leaves are very fine. The plant grows in dense clumps like the blue fescue *Festuca glauca* sold in nurseries, but Roemer's fescue has much more graceful leaves. Buyers include USFS, BLM, USFWS, public and private agencies.

**Characteristics:** Roemer's fescue is a short, erect, slow growing, long lived, perennial found from southern British Columbia to San Francisco, California. It has approximately 460,000 seeds per pound. It grows where annual rainfall range between 8-48 inches. Roemer's fescue is short in height with leaf foliage about 25 cm tall with stiff reproductive stems 90 cm long during flowering. It is highly cross-pollinating species with multiple phenotypes. Plant types have range of height, leaf and stem color, leaf canopy appearance, seed yield and other traits. Leaf and stem color can range from light green, glaucous, pink to rust red. Characteristics important to restoration practitioner's include low input requirements, drought tolerance, non-aggressive growth habit, compatibility with upland forbes and flowers and short compact plant growth. Roemer's fescue should be used in mixes containing California oatgrass in prairie wetlands and drought tolerant forbes and flowers on mesic upland sites.

**Comments:** Roemer's fescue was once the most dominant grass on western Oregon prairies (Wilson, 1998). Its habitat has been fragmented. A few plants thrive in the more mesic edges of dry grassy balds on mountain ridges. A few live in the drier edges of seeps near the foot of hills. Everything in between has been turned into farms or cities, grazed or covered with trees. We are collecting seed from many populations and have established a cultivated source of seed for prairie restoration, and perhaps for roadside revegetation and other used on our public lands. In the process we hope to compensate to some extent for deleterious genetic effects of fragmenting a once large, freely interbreeding population (Wilson and Kuykendal, 1998).

**Seeding rate:** Seed @ 5-8 lbs. Poast (sethoxydim) can be used to control several grass weed species in new and established stands of Roemer's fescue.

**Availability:** Commercial supplies of Roemer's fescue are very limited. Pacific Northwest Natives in cooperation with Dr. Barbara Wilson and The Institute of Applied Ecology - Corvallis has available **Willamette Valley Composite population**.



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Albany, Oregon 97321 • Telephone: 541.928.8239 • Fax: 541.924.8855 • E-mail: cwe@proaxis.com