

Serrated Tussock

Serrated Tussock (ST), *Nassella trichotoma* (Nees) Hack, native to South America was introduced into the United States during 1988. If established, this plant will significantly reduce the productivity and carrying capacity of our rangelands and pastures.

First incident - Approximately 650,000 pounds of tall fescue seed contaminated with ST were imported from Argentina during the fall of 1988. Retail sale was terminated and contaminated seed were recalled by Plant Protection & Quarantine in 1989. Most of the contaminated seed was either cleaned, destroyed or exported. Despite exhaustive efforts to remove the seed from the market, [distribution](#) occurred in five states (Illinois, Kentucky, Missouri, North Carolina, and South Carolina) and approximately 54,000 pounds of the contaminated seed were sold through retail outlets. In South Carolina seeds were sold in the following counties: Aiken, Chester, Fairfield, Greenville, Laurens, Lexington, Pickens and Sumter.

Descriptive Features - [Mature plants](#) are clump forming (approximately 12 inches in diameter at the base) perennial grasses approximately 18 inches tall. They have narrow leaves and a diffusely fibrous root system. Leaves are numerous, emerging from the base forming a tussock. They are tightly rolled, needle-like, and stiff with small serrations. Leaves appear brownish-green in spring and fall, and tend to be bleached yellow in winter. The leaf base is white and its junction at the sheath ([ligule](#)) is denoted by a white, hairless, vertical collar, about 1/16 inch long.

The seedhead is multi-branched and up to 14 inches long; it is purplish at flowering and golden brown at maturity. The yellowish seed ([floret](#)) is surrounded by bracts up to 1/16 inch long, with a tuft of white hair at one end, and a twisted awn up to 1 inch at the other. Reproduction is by seeds only, which are easily disseminated. Seeds may germinate throughout all seasons and persist in the soil for 13 years.

Please assist - If [established](#), patches of this weed will be mature enough to reproduce and begin spreading! If you find a suspect, mark the location and take

a sample of the plant to your county extension or State Department of Agriculture agent. It is anticipated that Serrated Tussock will first appear in areas where contaminated seed was planted and it will be easiest to recognize in unmowed areas.

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