

Bromus tectorum

[Synonyms : *Anisantha pontica*, *Anisantha tectorum*, *Bromus abortiflorus*, *Bromus setaceus*, *Bromus tectorum* var. *glabratus*, *Bromus tectorum* var. *hirsutus*, *Bromus tectorum* var. *nudus*, *Bromus tectorum* var. *tectorum*, *Festuca tectorum*, *Genea tectorum*, *Schedonorus tectorum*, *Zerna tectorum*]

DROOPING BROME is an annual grass. Native to the Mediterranean it has shiny purple-tinged, green flower spikelets with prominent bristles.

It is also known as *Brome des toits* (French), Bronco grass, Cheat, Cheat grass, Cheat grass brome, *Dachtrespe* (German), Downy brome, Downy cheat, Downy chess, Early chess, *Espiguilla colgante* (Spanish), *Forasacco dei tetti* (Italian), *Han que mai* (Chinese), *Juke* (Nepalese), Junegrass, *Kost'or krovельnyj* (Russian), Military grass, Mormon oats, *Stoklasa dachowa* (Polish), *Stoklas strechový* (Slovak), *Sveřepec střešní* (Czech), *Sveřep střešní* (Czech), *Taklost* (Swedish), and Wild oats.

Warning – the bristles can injure the eyes and mouths of livestock and contaminate sheep's wool, and the seeds can get into dogs' ears.

Tectorum is Latin (used for covering) meaning 'of roofs or growing on house roofs'.

The grass spread out from southern Europe into Russia and western and central Asia and was introduced to other regions including Iceland and Greenland to the north, Japan to the east, and South Africa, Australia and New Zealand to the south. It is only believed to have been introduced to North America in the 19th Century – some say in packing materials delivered to Denver in Colorado in the western United States – and since then has spread throughout the whole of North America (with the exception of the southeastern United States and a small part of Canada) down through Mexico. Its seeds are most often dispersed in the immediate area by wind or carriage on animal fur or birds' wings and further afield as a contaminant in crops, particularly grain, hay or straw.

The tiny seeds were only eaten by the Cahuilla North American Indian tribe when food was short.

The Navajo Indians fed their sheep and horses on the grass.

The leaves were laid under bedding when the Paiute were camping.

Some of the Navajo Indians used a plant infusion for facial cleansing during various rituals.

As with so many introduced plants drooping brome receives mixed reviews. For those who graze their livestock on it in the Autumn or early Spring (before flowering) it is a valuable forage crop but for others (particularly if they are growing Winter wheat) it is an annoying weed. It is interesting to note that a farmer in North America can expect a guaranteed maximum contamination of the seed he buys from his merchant in accordance with a particular State's laws and the permitted percentage of drooping brome seed allowed can vary from 0.5% to 2%. If this is worked out in the number of the invasive seeds per pound of seeds bought the figures are amazing ie. 40,800 to 163,300 in a 50 lb. bag. That is a lot of drooping brome seeds especially when one considers how prolific they are. Apart from the problems associated with its presence in crops (one of the biggest being apparently that it usually takes up water far faster than the other plants around it) it is also viewed with dislike in many parts of North America as it has displaced natural habitat over large stretches of land and often makes the environment

more susceptible to fire (as it matures early and remains dry and standing).
In North America like livestock, deer generally and antelope will graze on the grass during the Autumn and Spring and Canada geese enjoy the young shoots. The seed is attractive to many rodents and birds including partridge and pheasant.