



Oregon Sea Grant Extension  
Sustainable Tourism &  
Outdoor Recreation Program

# Interpretative Fact Sheet European Beachgrass (*Ammophila arenaria*)



The following short article is from the [Oregon Coast 101 Species](#) collection used by the Guide and Outfitter Recognized Professional (GORP) training program. These articles are intended to provide interesting facts you can share with your clientele and add value to your services.

An Interpretive Fact Sheet has been written about each species. We are currently uploading these blogs and creating the links.

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# European Beachgrass (*Ammophila Arenaria*)

 [tourism.oregonstate.edu/european-beachgrass-ammophila-arenaria/](https://tourism.oregonstate.edu/european-beachgrass-ammophila-arenaria/)

By colliiek2

August 28, 2020

And I'd like to give my love to everybody, and  
let them know that the grass may look greener on the other side,  
but believe me, it's just as hard to cut.

*Little Richard*



Beachgrass in the sunset, royalty free, Unsplash

As environmental mis-steps go, planting European Beachgrass at Golden Gate Park, San Francisco, in the late 1800s probably seemed like a great idea. This grass successfully stabilized dunes in Europe and North Africa and many agencies planted thousands of acres, much of it in Oregon.

## It seemed like such a good idea

European Beachgrass forms stiff, hardy clumps of grass that can reach nearly four feet tall. A strong rhizome mat holds clumps erect and facilitate fast colonization across an area. One small clump can produce 100 new shoots annually.

This plant provided a faster way to stabilize sand dunes, had few pests and predators, and grows very densely. The grass changes the shape of a dune and overall native ecology by displacing plants and animals by creating higher, steeper curve on the ocean side of a dune. This decreases sand flow to interior dunes impacting the long-term development of the whole coastal ecosystem.



Beachgrass on dune, royalty free Unsplash

## One tough grass

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Not only does European Beachgrass grow fast and dense, but it will tolerate a number of adverse conditions. For instance, the plant will survive for extended periods of time when buried by sea water and/or sand. In such a disturbance, rhizome pieces will break off. These pieces begin growing in new sites.

It will also grow in a variety of conditions both in pH, mineral or chemical issues, temperatures, and as a perennial live many years. A fungus that grows on the grass, may also make dunes less fertile and thus less likely to support other plants.

## The impact?

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Beachgrass is one of the most pervasive exotic plant species threatening the West Coast. It is everywhere and not only creating problems for plants but animals such as the endangered western snowy plover by increasing predator cover.

This noxious weed grows from California north along the Pacific coast into British Columbia. This grass was also planted in New Zealand and Western Australia and is considered noxious.

## Is it controllable?

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Maybe. Interest in controlling began about 1980. Finding a method that is effective, inexpensive, minimally invasive to other native species, flexible enough to use on steep slopes, and acceptable to a wide variety of land owner/managers is a tough challenge.

Several research projects have been underway for years looking at various removal techniques such as manual, mechanical, chemical, and fire alternatives. Other methods are still being sought.

#### **REFERENCES:**

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