

Virginia Wild Rye: *Elymus virginicus*



Cultivation: The preference is full or partial sun, moist to slightly dry conditions, and a loam, clay-loam, or gravelly soil with an average to above-average pH. This plant is easy to grow, but it can be short-lived. Most vegetative growth occurs early in the year (from mid-spring to early summer). Habitats include mesic to dry prairie remnants and grassy fens. This conservative species is rarely found in degraded habitats. In prairies, it becomes one of the understory grasses later in the year. The rather large seeds of Brome Grasses are eaten by various upland gamebirds, sparrows, and small rodents (ground squirrels, mice), while the foliage is grazed by rabbits, deer, and elk.

Plant Structure: This grass prefers full sun to light shade, moist conditions, and a fertile loamy soil (although other kinds of soil are readily tolerated). Plants that grow in sunlight tend to be more robust and a lighter shade of green than those that grow in shade. Habitats include deciduous woodlands (especially floodplain woodlands), bluffs, savannas and sandy savannas, rocky glades, moist prairies, edges of marshes, and low areas along rivers. This grass can adapt to moderate levels of disturbance. While it is often characterized as a prairie grass, Virginia Wild Rye is also common in wooded areas. When Virginia Wild Rye grows near wetlands, the seedheads are sometimes eaten by ducks (the Mallard and Lesser Scaup), while Canada Geese feed on the foliage. Prior to the development of its awned seedheads, this grass is also palatable to cattle, horses, and other livestock.

