

Nepalese Browntop



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Microstegium vimineum (Trin.) A. Camus **MIVI**
 Synonyms: Japanese silt grass, Mary's grass, basketgrass

Plant. Sprawling, annual grass, 0.5 to 3 feet (15 to 90 cm) in height. Flat short leaf blades, with off-center veins. Stems branching near the base and rooting at nodes to form dense and extensive infestations. Dried whitish-tan grass remains standing in winter.

Stem. Ascending to reclining, slender and wiry, up to 4 feet (120 cm) long, with alternate branching. Covered by overlapping sheaths with hairless nodes and internodes. Green to purple to brown. Aerial rootlets descend from lower nodes.

Leaves. Alternate (none basal) projecting out from stem, lanceolate to oblanceolate, 2 to 4 inches (5 to 10 cm) long and 0.07 to 0.6 inch (2 to 15 mm) wide. Blades flat, sparsely hairy on both surfaces and along margins. Midvein whitish and off center. Throat collar hairy. Ligule membranous with a hairy margin.

Flowers. July to October. Terminal, thin and spikelike raceme, to 3 inches (8 cm) long. Unbranched or with one to three lateral branches on an elongated wiry stem. Other thin racemes of self-pollinating flowers enclosed or slightly extending from lower leaf sheaths. Spikelets paired, with the outer stemmed and inner sessile.

Seeds. July to December. Husked grain, seed head thin, grain ellipsoid, 0.1 inch (2.8 to 3 mm) long, with seedstalks partially remaining during winter.

Ecology. Flourishes on alluvial floodplains and streambanks, mostly colonizing flood-scoured banks, due to water dispersal of seed and flood tolerance. Also common at forest edges, roadsides, and trailsides, as well as damp fields, swamps, lawns, and along ditches. Occurs up to 4,000 feet (1200 m) elevation. Very shade tolerant. Consolidates occupation by prolific seeding, with each plant producing 100 to 1,000 seeds that can remain viable in the soil for 3 years. Spreads on trails and recreational areas by seeds hitchhiking on hikers' and visitors' shoes and clothes.

Resembles crabgrass, *Digitaria* spp., and nimblewill, *Muhlenbergia schreberi* J.F. Gmel., both having broad short leaves, but distinguished from Nepalese browntop by branching seed heads and stout stems. **Also resembles** whitegrass, *Leersia virginica* Willd., which is a perennial with flat, compressed seed heads.

History and use. Native to temperate and tropical Asia, and first identified near Knoxville, TN, around 1919. Ground cover with little wildlife food value.

States with suspected infestations are shown in gray.



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September