

Common Arctic Grasses

Poaceae (Graminae) (Grasses):

Alopecurus alpinus
Arctagrostis latifolia
Arctophila fulva
Calamagrostis canadensis
Deschampsia caespitosa (= *D. brevifolius*)
Dupontia fisheri
Festuca brachyphylla
Hordeum jubatum
Phippsia algida
Poa arctica
Trisetum spicatum

Family: Poaceae
Common Name: Alpine Foxtail

Alopecurus alpinus

- Inflorescence very compact spike (into a “foxtail”)
- Leaf sheaths inflated.
- 1 floret per spikelet.
- No palea.
- Rhizomatous.
- **Habitat:** One of the most common grasses in the High Arctic. Elsewhere mostly on disturbed, moist sites, sandy sites, in the tundra, or mixed with other sedges and grasses.



Family: Poaceae

Common Name: Polar Grass

Arctagrostis latifolia

- **Loose inflorescence (panicle) with many branches, and many spikelets per branch.**
- **1 floret per spikelet.**
- **Rhizomatous**
- **Habitat: Common on disturbed sites (especially on frost boils) and in tundra and mixed with other grasses and sedges.**



Photograph by Mollie MacCormac



Photograph by K. Clarkin

Family: Poaceae

Common Name: Pendant Grass

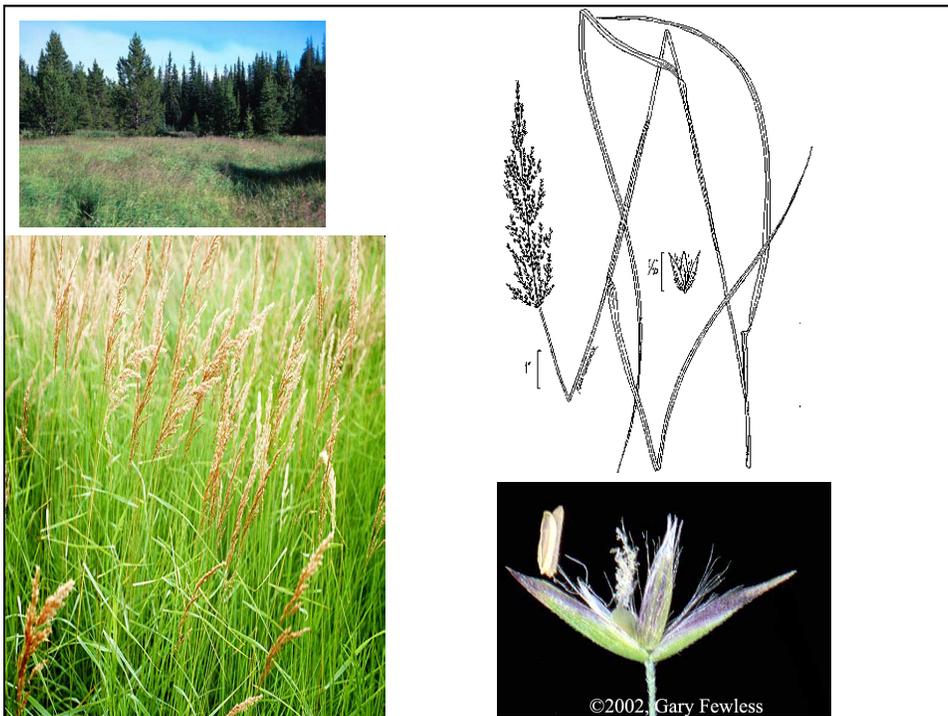
Arctophila fulva

- Aquatic grass, often red color late in summer.
- Upper leaf blades much longer than lower.
- 3-5 florets per spikelet.
- **Habitat:** Shallow water to about 1 m deep. Lake and pond margins. Favorite food and habitat of tundra swans.



Family: Graminae (Poaceae) ***Calamagrostis canadensis***
Common Name: Bluejoint

- Many branches, and many spikelets per branch (compared with *Arctagrostis*).
- 1 floret per spikelet (as in *Arctagrostis* but much smaller florets).
- Tuft of hairs at the base of the lemma.
- **Habitat:** Widespread in disturbed areas (fire, bulldozed areas), often in forests but not flowering in heavily shaded areas.



Family: Poaceae
Common Name: Arctic
Hairgrass

Deschampsia caespitosa
(= *D. brevifolius*)

- **Caespitose (bunch-forming).**
- **Inflorescence spreading with appressed secondary branches.**
- **2-3 florets per spikelet.**
- **Habitat: Disturbed silts and clays, sand dunes, flood plains, wet areas, mostly mineral soils.**



Family: Poaceae
Common Name: Dupontia

Dupontia fisheri

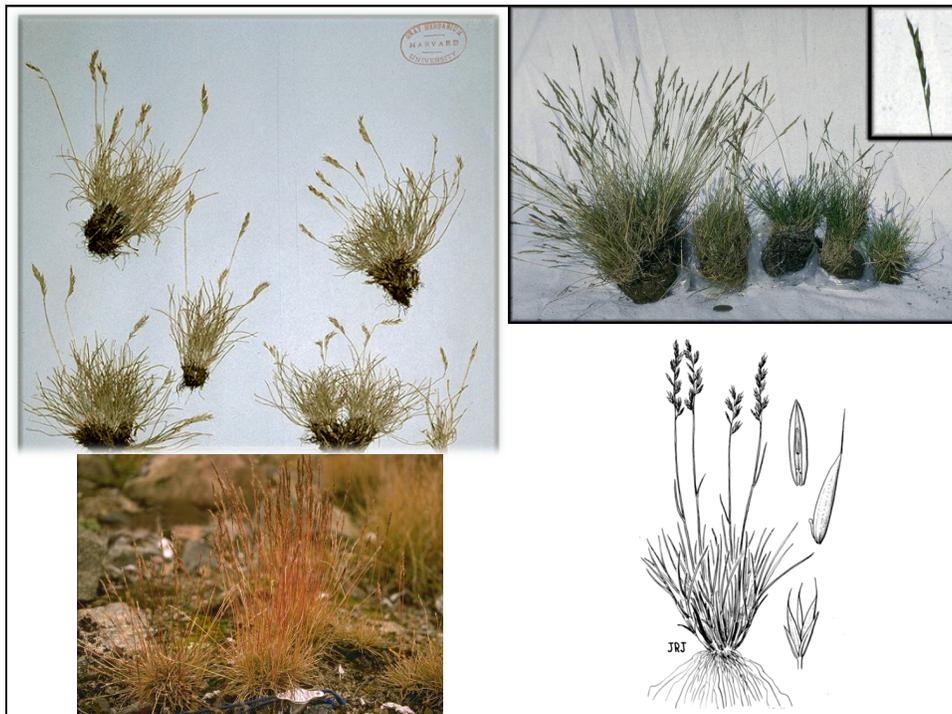
- Rhizomatous
- Single stiff erect culm, persistent over winter
- Inflorescence appressed or spreading
- Leaves are canoe-shaped like *Poa*.
- Few branches
- 1-2 florets spikelet
- Habitat: Wet meadows, mineral soils, especially saline meadows near the sea coast.



Family: Poaceae
Common Name: ?

Festuca brachyphylla

- Short (<15 cm), caespitose (bunch forming),
- Narrow 0.3-1 mm leaves
- Laterally compressed (often one-sided) spike. Branches 1-9 mm long
- 2-4 florets per spikelet
- *Festuca* is differentiated from *Poa* by awn at the tip of the lemma, and generally narrower (not canoe-shaped) leaves.
- Habitat: Drier areas, well-fertilized areas, bird mounds, animal dens. Reddish in nitrogen-rich habitats



Family: Poaceae

Common Name: Squirrel-tail Grass,
Foxtail Barley

Hordeum jubatum

- Inflorescence spicate (the spikelets forming a triad at each node with the central one fertile and usually sessile, the lateral ones pedicellate, and usually sterile).
- 1 floret per spikelet.
- Very long awn from tip of lemma, 10-60 mm long.
- Introduced plant, often along roads, dry meadows, widespread.



Family: Poaceae
Common Name:

Phippsia algida

- Generally small caespitose plants.
- Compressed spike.
- Leaves, flat or folded, with prowlike apex.
- Habitat: Snowbeds, wet areas, disturbed areas. Nitrophilous. Common in the High Arctic in wetter areas. Circumpolar High Arctic species, mainly coastal areas.



Family: Poaceae

Common Name: Arctic Meadow-grass,
Arctic Bluegrass

Poa arctica

- Often caespitose and rhizomatous
- Aerial stems decumbent (usually leafy for approximately half their length)
- *Poa*, *Dupontia*, and *Phippsia* have canoe-shaped leaves
- 2-3 florets per spikelet, no awns on lemmas
- Moist habitats, tundra, widespread



Family: Graminae

Common Name: Spiked Trisetum, Narrow
False-oat

Trisetum spicatum

- **Inflorescence, dense cylindrical or ovoid, often deep purple brown**
- **Prominent twisted awns arising from above the middle of the back of the lemma**
- **Culm, strongly pubescent with soft downward pointing hairs**
- **Nitrophilous habitats including bird mounds and animal dens, disturbed areas, mineral soils, generally dry habitats.**

