



Mediterranean needle grass
Stipa capensis
Grass family (Poaceae)

Bristles
Pointing upward
Beginning to bend
outward

Fig. 1 Young grass
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Fig. 2 Aging grass
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Quick Reference

Park WATCH list
Naturalized in the Coachella
Valley/Sonoran Desert with
specimens collected near
the south boundary of JOTR

Winter Annual

Flowering time(s)
Spring

Key characteristics

Vegetation (Figures All)

- Plant: ages **green to tan**; flower heads with **long bristles**; **feathery** looking at maturity
- Stem/Branch: stems **4-12 inches** long
- Leaves: **thin** blades, mostly at **base** of plant, are **2 to 6 inches** long and rolled inward with age; +/- hairy; tips taper to a **sharp point**; one leaf below each flower head

Flowers (Figures All)

- Flower heads: individual flowers have **2 to 4 inch bristles**; young flower head is 'needle' like with bristles **pointing upward**, at maturity **twisting** bristles **bend outward**
- Seeds: break apart at maturity

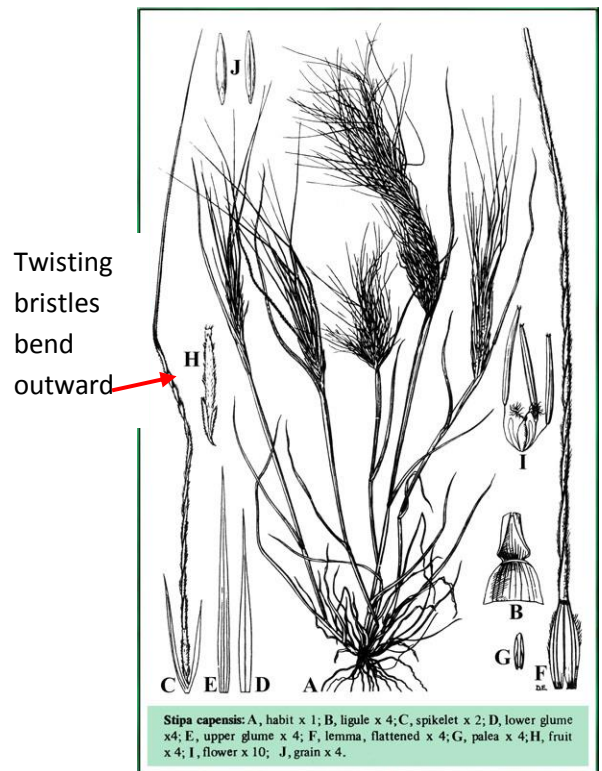
Habitat and Distribution

Desert scrub, roadsides, disturbed areas; currently **only in Coachella Valley**; spreads by seed

Similar Native Species: *Elymus* or Squirrel tail



Fig. 3 Dense stand of needle grass
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Twisting
bristles
bend
outward

Stipa capensis: A, habit x 1; B, ligule x 4; C, spikelet x 2; D, lower glume x 4; E, upper glume x 4; F, lemma, flattened x 4; G, palea x 4; H, fruit x 4; I, flower x 10; J, grain x 4.

Fig. 4 Illustration