

Weed of The Week

Giant Foxtail (*Setaria faberi*)

The members of the foxtail family are easy to identify once they begin to flower. Foxtails are recognizable by the spike inflorescences that give them the name foxtail. For the giant foxtail, this inflorescence curves downward as it matures. Two other varieties are commonly found in Ohio. Green and yellow foxtails usually have upright inflorescences. Giant foxtail is often found growing next to green and yellow foxtail. Giant foxtail grows anywhere from 2 to 7 feet tall, although around 4 feet is most common. Leaves of giant foxtail are $\frac{3}{4}$ " to 1" across and up to 16" long. You can find small, short hairs along the upper surface of the leaf blades of giant foxtail. The stem is often smooth.

Foxtails are summer annual weeds that can spread rapidly. Giant foxtail can easily become a problem in most horticulture and agronomic crops. Foxtail tends to invade disturbed sites such as roadsides, landfills, fence rows, and right of ways. The bristles of giant foxtails can become lodged in the gums and tongues of livestock. This can develop into serious ulcerations in grazing animals. Regular mowing will not eliminate foxtail. However, if you can time mowing cut giant foxtail between boot stage (seeds start developing in the sheath) and seed set you can suppress the spread of most seed. Tilling soil can help bury seeds so that they expire before they are at the correct emergence depth. Since foxtail is a grass, broadleaf herbicides do not control it. Pre-emergent such as Prowl H2O exist but have limitations. If foxtail infestation is minor, you can overseed with desirable cool-season grasses in the late summer to help compete with the foxtails.

