

Timothy Grass

(*Phleum pratense*)

Timothy is a very common grass, found in every US state. Its distinctive long, narrow, cylindrical seed head makes it easy to identify. Timothy can be found in disturbed areas such as vacant lots, roadsides and along fence rows. It does not tolerate mowing well. It was named after a farmer who first promoted the grass as a crop.

Timothy produces very large amounts of highly allergenic pollen. A given flower head will produce pollen only over two weeks or so, but flower heads may bloom at different times, so the actual pollen season may be much longer. There is also the problem with cross-reacting grasses that can contribute to symptoms being provoked over longer periods of time.

There are a number of allergenic extracts approved by the FDA for the diagnosis and treatment of allergic disease. Many of these belong to the sub-family Pooideae and thus are close relatives to each other. Being a close relative means there is considerable cross-reactivity (the ability of pollen from one plant in the group to cause symptoms in a person who is allergic to the pollen from another plant in that group) between different members of a group, in this case the same sub-family. Allergenic extract grasses in the Pooideae sub-family include Meadow Fescue, Timothy, Ryegrasses, Orchard Brome, Bluegrasses, Redtop, Sweet Vernal, Cultivated Oat, Velvet Grass and Wheat grasses. There are a number of allergens in these grasses that completely cross-react with each other, but there are also some allergens unique to many of these grasses.

