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# Derivation of the Generic Names of North American Grasses (Names in Current or Recent Use)

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# **DERIVATION OF THE GENERIC NAMES OF NORTH AMERICAN GRASSES (Names in Current or Recent Use)**

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- Achnatherum • Gk., scale + barb: awned lemma
- Achnella • Achnatherum x Nassella
- Acrachne • Gk., at the tip + chaff or scale: inflorescence branches terminate in rudimentary spikelets
- Aegilops • Gk., preferred by goats + appearance: resembling an herb sought out by goats
- Aegopogon • Gk., goat + beard: hairy spikelet clusters
- Agrohordeum • Agropyron x Hordeum
- Agropogon • Agrostis x Polypogon
- Agropyron • Gk., a field, country + wheat: resembling wheat
- Agrositanion • Agropyron x Sitanion
- Agrostis • Gk. & L., a kind of grass or other fodder plant, pasture
- Aira • Gk., a kind of grass, perhaps a Lolium species: now applied to an unrelated grass
- Allolepis • Gk., different + scale: unequal lemmas in male and female spikelets
- Allopterospis • Gk., strange + appearance: resembling Panicum
- Alopecurus • Gk., fox + tail: spike-like inflorescence
- Amelichloa • Maria Amelia Torres, Argentine agrostologist + Gk., grass
- Ammocalamagrostis • Ammophila x Calamagrostis
- Ammophila • Gk., sand + loving: coastal dune habitat
- Ampelodesmos • Gk. & L., vine + to tie together: leaves once used to tie up grape vines
- Amphibromus • Gk. double + Bromus: similarity in spikelets
- Amphicarpum • Gk., double + fruit-bearing: plants form both aerial and subterranean spikelets
- Andropogon • Gk., man + beard: hairy spikelet pedicels
- Anthenantia • Gk., flower + contrary: based on early interpretation of palea in relation to lemma
- Anthephora • Gk., flower + to bear: calyx-like involucre enclosing the spikelets
- Anthoxanthum • Gk., yellow + flower: yellow-green color of mature spikelets
- Apera • Gk., not + mutilated: spikelets similar to Calamagrostis, but sometimes with vestigial florets
- Apluda • L., chaff, bran: uncertain, perhaps referring to the persistent boat-shaped spathes
- Arctagrostis • Gk. north + Agrostis: resembling Agrostis and found in the Arctic
- Arctodupontia • Arctophila x Dupontia
- Arctophila • Gk. north + love: a grass restricted to the holarctic
- Aristida • L., a stout hair, awn: conspicuously three-awned lemmas
- Arrhenatherum • Gk., male + awn: upper floret staminate and awned
- Arthraxon • Gk., joint + axis: inflorescence axis breaks apart at maturity
- Arundinaria • L., a reed or cane + resembling: resembling Arundo
- Astrebla • Gk. without + screw: lemma awn not twisted
- Arundo • L., a reed grass: Celtic root suggests a reed growing in wet places
- Avena • L., classical name for the oat
- Avenula • Uncertain: perhaps a diminutive form of Avena
- Axonopus • Gk., axis, stem, axle + foot: digitate inflorescence branches or spreading stolons

Bambusa • Latinized form of bambu or mambu, a Malayan common name  
 Beckmannia • Johann Beckmann (1739-1811), German botanist, author, historian  
 Blepharidachne • Gk., eyelash + chaff or scale: ciliate lemma margins  
 Blepharoneuron • Gk., eyelash + nerve: lemma nerves with long hairs  
 Bothriochloa • Gk., pit + grass: prominent pit in the lower glume of the sessile spikelets  
 Bouteloua • Claudio (1774-1842) and Estéban (1776-1813) Boutelou y Soldevilla, Spanish botanists  
 Brachiaria • L., fore-arm + pertaining to: signal arm-like inflorescence branches  
 Brachyelytrum • Gk., short + husk: relatively short glumes  
 Brachypodium • Gk., thick + foot: very short pedicels  
 Brevipodium • L., short + foot: tussock growth form  
 Briza • Gk., a kind of nodding grain: drooping spikelets  
 Bromidium • Gk. Bromus + diminutive: reference unclear because often treated in Agrostis  
 Bromopsis • Gk. Bromus + resembling: grasses generally treated in Bromus  
 Bromus • Gk., food: classical name for oats  
 Buchloë • Gk., buffalo + grass: contraction of Bubalochloë  
  
 Calamagrostis • Gk., a reed grass: general aspect of these grasses  
 Calammophila • Calamagrostis x Ammophila  
 Calamovilfa • Gk., reed + Vilfa, a grass genus  
 Catabrosa • Gk., devouring or corrosion: uneven glume apices  
 Catapodium • Gk., below + little foot: spikelets borne on short pedicels  
 Cathestecum • Gk., stationary: prostrate rhizomes  
 Celtica • Celts + belonging to: species most common on Iberian Peninsula once occupied by the Celts  
 Cenchrus • Gk., classical name for proso millet and other small-grained cereals  
 Ceratochloa • Gk., horn + grass: short lemma awn  
 Chasmanthium • Gk., hollow + flower: glumes spread at maturity to expose grain  
 Chloris • Gk., Goddess of flowers  
 Chondros[i]um • Gr., grain: uncertain, perhaps the wheat-like spikes in some species  
 Chrysopogon • Gk., golden + beard: golden hairs at spikelet base  
 Cinna • Gk., a kind of grass, perhaps barley, an unrelated grass  
 Cladoraphis • Gk., stem + needle: inflorescence axis terminates in sharp point  
 Coelorachis • Gk. hollow + axis: concave depressions along inflorescence axis  
 Coix • Uncertain, perhaps Gk. because of resemblance of beads to the fruits of the doum-palm  
 Coleanthus • Gk., sheath + flower: spikelets enclosed in upper sheaths  
 Cortaderia • Sp., to cut or harvest, a knife for cutting honey-combs: leaf blades with sharp margins  
 Cottea • Johann Georg Cotta, Baron von Cottendorf (1796-1863), German patron of Science  
 Corynephorus • Gk., club-bearing: awn tips are club-shaped  
 Critesion • Gk. granary or barley: grasses often now included in Hordeum, the barley genus  
 Crypsis • Gk., hidden: inflorescences of some species concealed in upper leaf sheaths  
 Ctenium • Gk., a small comb: inflorescence a one-sided spike  
 Cutandia • Vincente Cutand (1804-1866), a Spanish botanist  
 Cymbopogon • Gk., boat + beard: hairy spikelets subtended by a boat-shaped leaf  
 Cynodon • Gk. & L., teeth of a saw, dog tooth: hard, scaly rhizomes  
 Cynosurus • Gk., dog + tail: shape of the inflorescence  
  
 Dactylis • Gk., finger: appearance of inflorescence branches  
 Dactyloctenium • Gk., finger + small comb: appearance of inflorescence branches  
 Danthonia • Étienne Danthione, early 19<sup>th</sup> century French botanist, grasses of Provence  
 Dasyochloa • Gk., hairy + grass: pubescent lemma bases  
 Dasypyrum • Gk., hairy + wheat: hairy glumes of a grass in the same tribe as wheat  
 Dendrocalamus • Gk. tree + reed: woody culms  
 Deschampsia • Louis Auguste Deschamps (1765-1842), French physician-botanist  
 Desmazeria • Jean Baptiste Desmazières 1787-1862), French botanist  
 Diarrhena • Gk., twice + male: florets have only two stamens  
 Dichantherium • Gk., in two + flowering: plants produce panicles in the spring and fall  
 Dichanthium • Gk. in two + flower: inflorescence of bisexual and male or sterile spikelets

Digitaria • L., finger: appearance of inflorescence branches  
Dinebra • Arabic, a little tail: prolonged glume tips  
Diplachne • Gk., double + lobes: two-lobed lemmas  
Dissanthelium • Gk., two + small flower: spikelets with two fertile florets  
Distichlis • Gk., in two rows + smooth: appearance of leaves  
Dupoa • Dupontia x Poa  
Dupontia • J. D. Dupont, 19<sup>th</sup> century French botanist, author of a flora of Paris and environs (1813)

Echinochloa • Gk., hedgehog + grass  
Ectosperma • Gk., free + seed: grain falls free of palea and lemma at maturity  
Ehrharta • Jakob Friederick Ehrhart (1742-1795), German-Swiss botanist, student of Linnaeus  
Eleusine • Gk., Eleusis, the ancient Greek town where Ceres was worshiped  
Elionurus • Gk., to roll + tail or door-mouse + tail: appearance of inflorescence  
Elyhordeum • Elymus x Hordeum  
Elylymus • Elymus x Leymus  
Elymordeum • Elymus x Hordeum  
Elymotrigia • Elymus x Elytrigia  
Elymus • Gk., a kind of millet  
Elysitanion • Elymus x Sitanion  
Elytrigia • Gk., cover + corn crop: place where it grows, or Elymus + Triticum  
Enneapogon • Gk., nine + beard: lemma bears nine awns  
Enteropogon • Gk., bowel + beard: long and twisted lemma awn  
Eragrostis • Gk., love + grass or early + wild or very much + Agrostis  
Eremochloa • Gk., solitary + grass: inflorescence a single spike or desolate + grass: dry habitat  
Eremopoa • Gk., solitary + desert + poa (a grass): habitat in Asia and the Mediterranean  
Eremopyrum • Gk., desert + wheat: desert grass resembling wheat  
Erianthus • Gk., wool + flower: glumes bear long hairs  
Eriochloa • L., woolly + grass: hairy spikelets  
Erioneuron • Gk., woolly + nerve: palea keels hairy  
Euchlaena • Gk., true or well + cloak: sheathing of pistillate spikelets  
Eustachys • Gk., true or well + spike: spikelets borne on very short pedicels

Festuca • L., classical name for a weedy grass, stalks, and straw  
Festulolium • Festuca x Lolium  
Festulpia • Festuca x Vulpia

Gastridium • Gk., a small pouch or sac: appearance of the base of the glumes  
Gaudinia • Jean François Gaudin (1766-1833), Swiss cleric and Professor of Botany at Lausanne  
Glyceria • Gk., sweet: sweet-tasting grains in some species  
Graphephorum • Gk., writing stylus + bear: rachilla extension  
Gymnopogon • Gk., naked + beard: well-developed naked rachilla extension  
Gynerium • Gk., female + wool: glumes of pistillate spikelets bear long hairs

Hackelochloa • Eduard Hackel (1850-1926), Austrian agrostologist + Gk., grass  
Hainardia • Pierre Hainard (1936 -), Swiss phytogeographer  
Heleochloa • Gk., marsh + grass: its typical habitat  
Helictotrichon • Gk., twisted + bristle: lemma awn column twisted  
Hemarthria • Gk., half + joint: inflorescence axis breaks apart at maturity or blood + joint: reddish joints  
Hesperochloa • L., western + grass: its single species endemic to the western United States  
Hesperostipa • Gk., western + Stipa: region where these needle grasses grow  
Heteropogon • Gk., different + beard: difference in awns of the perfect and male florets  
Hierochloë • Gk., sacred + grass: use of fragrant plants during religious ceremonies  
Hilaria • Auguste François de St. Hilaire (1779-1853), French naturalist  
Holcus • L., a kind of grass or Gk. a kind of cereal or grass  
Hopia • after the Hopi Native Americans of the American Southwest, where it grows  
Hordeum • L., classical name for barley

Hydrochloa • Gk., water + grass: marsh or stream bank habitat  
Hymenachne • Gk. membrane + scale: membranous fertile lemma  
Hyparrhenia • Gk., below + male: male spikelets at inflorescence base  
Hystrix • Gk., porcupine or hedgehog: long awns

Imperata • Ferrante Imperato (1550-1625), Italian apothecary and naturalist  
Ischaemum • Gk., to hold back + blood: seeds used to stop bleeding

Jarava • Juan de Jarava, Spanish physician and naturalist

Karoochloa • Karroo region of South Africa + Gk., grass  
Kikuyuochloa • Kikuyu people of Kenya + Gk., grass  
Koeleria • Goerg Ludwig Koeler (1765-1807), German botanist

Lachnagrostis • Gk. wool + Agrostis: resembling Agrostis, but lemmas hairy  
Lagurus • Gk., hair + tail: inflorescence resembles a hare's tail  
Lamarckia • Jean Baptiste Antonine Pierre Monet de Lamarck (1744-1829, French naturalist  
Lasiacis • Gk., woolly + point: lemma and palea end in tufts of hairs  
Leersia • Johann Daniel Leers (1727-1774), German apothecary and botanist  
Leptochloa • Gk., slender + grass: inflorescence a series of slender spikes  
Leptoloma • Gk., thin + border: the narrow margin of the bisexual floret  
Lepturus • Gk., slender + tail: slender inflorescence or narrow glumes  
Leucopoa • Gk. white + poa (a grass): spikelet color  
Leydeum • Leymus x Hordeum  
Leymus • anagram of Elymus  
Limnodea • Gk., marshy or alteration of Limnas, a grass genus now included in Alopecurus  
Lolium • L., classical name for a troublesome weed or an inedible grass  
Lophochlaena • Gk. crest + cloak: appearance of lemma apex  
Lophochloa • Gk., crest + grass: appearance of lemma apex  
Luziola • Luzula, a genus of sedges + resembling  
Lycurus • Gk., wolf + tail: spike-like inflorescence

Macrobriza • Gk. large + Briza: with spikelets similar to Briza, but larger  
Manisuris • Gk., necklace + tail: resemblance of inflorescence to a beaded necklace  
Megathrysus • Gk. large + wand: conspicuous panicle  
Melica • L., honey + belonging to: sweet flavor of stem or a millet or Italian for sorghum  
Melinis • Gk., a kind of cereal  
Mibora • Gk., small + food: producing little grain or forage  
Microchloa • Gk., small + grass: diminutive plant size  
Microstegium • Gk., small + cover: glume size  
Miliun • L., millet: classical name for the proso millet  
Miscanthus • Gk., stalk + flower: pedicellate spikelets  
Mnesithea • Mnesitheus, early Greek physician and herbalist  
Molinia • Juan Ignazio Molina (1740-1829), Chilean missionary-botanist  
Monanthochloe • Gk., one + flower + grass: inflorescence consists of a single spikelet  
Monerma • Gk., one + support: spikelet has only one glume  
Monroa • see Munroa  
Moorochloa • Gk., foolish + grass: published only because a well-established generic name not permitted  
Muhlenbergia • Gotthilf Heinrich Ernst Muhlenberg (1753-1815), American Lutheran minister and botanist  
Munroa • General Sir William Munro (1818-1880), British soldier, botanist, bamboo expert

Nardus • Obscure. Gk. for spikenard or other aromatic plants, which this grass is not  
Nassella • L., a kind of basket used to catch fish; fanciful reference to spikelet appearance  
Neeragrostis • Gk., new + Eragrostis: plants resembling that genus, but dioecious  
Neostapfia • Gk., new + Otto Stapf (1857-1933), Austrian-British botanist at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew  
Neyraudia • Anagram of Reynaudia, a grass genus named for A. A. Reynaud, a plant collector in Burma

Notodanthonia: Gk., south + Danthonia: southern hemisphere grasses once included in Danthonia

Olyra • Gk., an ancient name for a kind of grain

Opizia • Philipp Maximilian Opiz (1787-1858), Czech botanist

Oplismenus • Gk., armed: awned glumes and sterile lemmas

Orcuttia • Charles Russell Orcutt (1864-1929), Southern California botanist

Oryza • Gk., classical name for rice

Oryzopsis • Gk., rice + resembling: similarity in appearance of grains

Panicum • L., classical name for millet or bread + belonging to, suggesting use in bread making

Pappophorum • Gk., grandfather + bearing: lemmas long-haired, as in an old man's beard

Pappostipa • Gk. grandfather + Stipa: plumose awn-column

Parapholis • Gk., near + Pholiuris, whose glumes resemble the scales of a snake

Pascopyrum • L., pasture + Gk., wheat: inflorescence wheat-like

Paspalidium • Paspalum + Gk. -idium suffix suggesting a diminutive resemblance

Paspalum • Gk., classical name for a kind of millet

Pennisetum • L., feather + bristle: spikelets subtended by feathery bristles

Phalaris • Gk., classical name for a grass with shiny spikelets or L. for the bright part of a helmet

Phalaroides • Phalaris + Gk. resembling: spikelets similar to those of Phalaris

Phanopyrum • Gk. bright + wheat: appearance of the grain

Pharus • Gk., mantle, sheet, or cloth: leaves used to make clothing

Phippsia • Captain Constantine John Phipps (1744-1792), British explorer of the Arctic

Phleum • Gk., classical name for a marsh reed

Phragmites • Gk., hedge + resembling and L., a kind of reed growing in hedges

Phyllostachys • Gk. leaf + spike: appearance of the pseudospikelets

Piptatherum • Gk., falling + bristle or spine: deciduous lemma awns

Piptochaetium • Gk., falling + bristle: deciduous awns

Pleioblastus • Gk. several + bud or sprout: nodes appear to have several buds

Pleuraphis • Gk., several + needle: glumes and lemmas bear 2+ awns or Gk., side: awn position

Pleuropogon • Gk., rib + beard: lemma veins densely hairy or to the bristly palea

Poa • Gk., classical name for grasses or for other plants providing fodder

Podagrostis • Gk., foot + Agrostis: spikelets resembling that genus, but with prolonged rachilla

Pogonarthria • Gk., beard + joint: hairy rachilla internodes

Polypogon • Gk., many + beard: appearance of the inflorescence

Polytrias • Gk., several + three: spikelets three per node

Psathyrostachys • Gk., brittle + spike: inflorescence axis breaks readily into segments at maturity

Pseudoroegneria • Gk., false + Roegneria, a genus of grasses

Pseudosasa • Gk., false + Sasa, a genus of bamboos

Ptilagrostis • Gk., feather + Agrostis: spikelets resembling that genus, but with feathery awns

Puccinellia • Benedetto Luigi Puccinelli (1808-1850), Italian botanist, Director of the Botanical Gardens (Lucca)

Pucciphippsia • Puccinellia x Phippsia

Redfieldia • John Howard Redfield (1815-1895), Philadelphia businessman and amateur botanist

Ripidium • Gk., fan: shape of the inflorescence

Reimarochloa • Juan Alberto Enrique Reimar (1729-1814), German physician and biologist + Gk., grass

Rhynchelytrum • L., beak + scale or cover: short beak of upper glume and sterile lemma

Rostraria • L., beak + pertaining to: beaked lemma

Rottboellia • Christen Friis Rottboell (1727-1797), Danish botanist

Rytidosperma • Gk., wrinkled + seed: name an error for mistaking wrinkled larvae for grains

Saccharum • L., sugar: sweet culms of sugar cane and related species

Sacciolepis • Gk., small bag or sack + scale: inflated upper glume

Sasa • Japanese for various species of small bamboo

Schedolium • Schedonorus x Lolium

Schedololium • Schedonorus x Lolium

Schedonnardus • Gk., near + Nardus, a grass genus

Schedonorus • Gk. near to + tail: short awn of lower glume  
 Schismus • Gk., a splitting: two-toothed lemma apex  
 Schizachne • Gk., split + chaff or scale: bifid lemma apex  
 Schizachyrium • Gk., split + chaff or scale: deeply bilobed upper lemma  
 Sclerachloa • Gk., hard + grass: hardened glumes  
 Scleropoa • Gk., hard or dry + grass: spikelets similar to *Poa*, but leathery  
 Scleropogon • Gk., hard + beard: upper florets reduced to long hairs  
 Scolochloa • Gk., prickle + grass: lemma apex toothed  
 Scribneria • Frank Lamson Scribner (1851-1938), American agrostologist, U. S. National Herbarium  
 Secale • L., classical name for a cereal  
 Setaria • L., bristle + possessing: spikelets subtended by one or more bristles  
 Setariopsis • L., *Setaria* + resembling  
 Sieglingia • Johann Blasius Siegling (1760-1835), Professor of Botany, Erfurt, Germany  
 Sinocalamus • L., China + reed: a bamboo native to China  
 Sitanion • Gk., grain of barley or wheat + occurrence: inflorescence similar to those grasses  
 Sorengia • Robert John Soreng (b. 1952), American agrostologist, U. S. National Museum  
 Sorghastrum • *Sorghum* + L., somewhat resembling  
 Sorghum • It., sorgho, the common name for the plant  
 Spartina • Gk., broom: leaves used to make brooms similar to those made from *Spartium junceum*  
 Sphenopholis • Gk., sedge + scale: shape of the upper glume  
 Sporobolus • Gk., seed + to throw: mature seeds expelled from grain at maturity  
 Steinchisma • Gk. narrow + gaping hollow: spreading bracts of lower floret  
 Stenotaphrum • Gk., narrow + trench: spikelets sunken in pits on inflorescence axis  
 Stipa • Gk., coarse component of plant fibers; L., tow: fibers used in rope making  
 Stiporyzopsis • *Stipa* x *Oryzopsis*  
 Swallenia • Jason Richard Swallen (1903-1991), American agrostologist, U. S. National Herbarium

Taeniatherum • Gk., ribbon + awn: flattened base of lemma awns  
 Themedra • Uncertain: Arabic name for a grass or for a ditch filled with water  
 Thinopyrum • Gk. beach + wheat: resembling wheat and growing on dunes  
 Torreyochloa • John Torrey (1796-1873), American physician, botanist, and chemist + grass  
 Trachypogon • Gk., rough + beard: hairy lemma awn  
 Tragus • Gk., he-goat: Gk. for Hieronymus Bock (1498-1554), German botanist (bock German for goat)  
 Tribolium • Gk. three + a point: spikelet with three florets and bristly glumes  
 Trichachne • Gk., hair + chaff: long hairs of glumes and sterile lemmas  
 Trichloris • Gk., three + *Chloris*, a similar grass, but with three-awned lemmas  
 Trichoneura • Gk., hair + nerve: lemma with ciliate keels  
 Tridens • L., three + tooth: three-toothed lemma apex  
 Triplasis • Gk., triple or three-fold: lemma apex bears an awn and two lobes  
 Tripogon • Gk., three + beard: lemma apex bears three awns  
 Tripsacum • Gk., three + small pieces: inflorescence axis breaks apart into three or more segments  
 Triraphis • Gk. three + needle: three principal lemma nerves extended as short awns  
 Trisetum • L., three + bristle: three-awned lemma  
 Triticosecale • *Triticum* x *Secale*  
 Triticum • L., classical name for wheat, derived from the word for grind  
 Tuctoria • Anagram of *Orcuttia*

Uniola • L., a kind of grass  
 Urochloa • Gk., tail + grass: lemma contracts abruptly to form a tail-like awn

Vahlodea • Jens Laurentius Vahl (1796-1854), Danish plant collector and librarian  
 Vaseyochloa • George Vasey (1822-1893), American physician, agrostologist with the U. S. D. A. + Gk., grass  
 Ventenata • Étienne Pierre Ventenat (1757-1808), French botanist, cleric, and librarian  
 Vetiveria • Tamil, cut + root: referring to propagation or its aromatic roots  
 Vulpia • Johann Samuel Vulpius (1760-1846), German apothecary and botanist

Willkommia • Heinrich Moritz Willkomm (1821-1895), German botanist, Director of Botanical Garden (Prague)

Zea • Gk., a kind of one-seeded grain or L., for a kind of wheat

Zizania • Gk., a weed of grain fields, perhaps darnel, an unrelated grass

Zizaniopsis • Gk., Zizania + resembling

Zoysia • Karl Zois Edelstein (or Karl von Zoys) (1756-1800), Austrian botanist

Zuloagaea • Fernando Omar Zuloaga (b. 1951), Argentine-American botanist

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