

# Japanese Stiltgrass

## Midwest Invasive Plant Fact Sheet #6 *Microstegium vimineum*



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**Quick Facts:** Japanese Stiltgrass (*Microstegium vimineum*) is an invasive grass native to Japan, China, Korea, Malaysia, and India. While this species' method of entry into the United States is unknown, it was originally observed in the early 1900s. Japanese Stiltgrass is very adaptable in moist environments, including streambanks, floodplains, forests, and some wetland environments. While it prefers shade, it can grow in full sun conditions as well. It has also been observed in drier soil conditions. Japanese Stiltgrass forms dense mats of vegetation that smother and displace native plant species, impacting pollinators and reducing local biodiversity. Additionally, these monocultures can impair forest regeneration, resulting in reduced productivity in timber sites. While deer may browse this species, their activity is not enough to stop its spread.

**Invasion Strategy:** Japanese Stiltgrass is an annual plant and reproduces exclusively by seed. Each adult plant can release between 100 and 1,000 seeds. These seeds can remain viable for up to five years, and soil disturbance enhances seed germination. Seed is spread by foot traffic, machinery, wildlife, and even livestock. This species also spreads through rhizomes in disturbed areas.

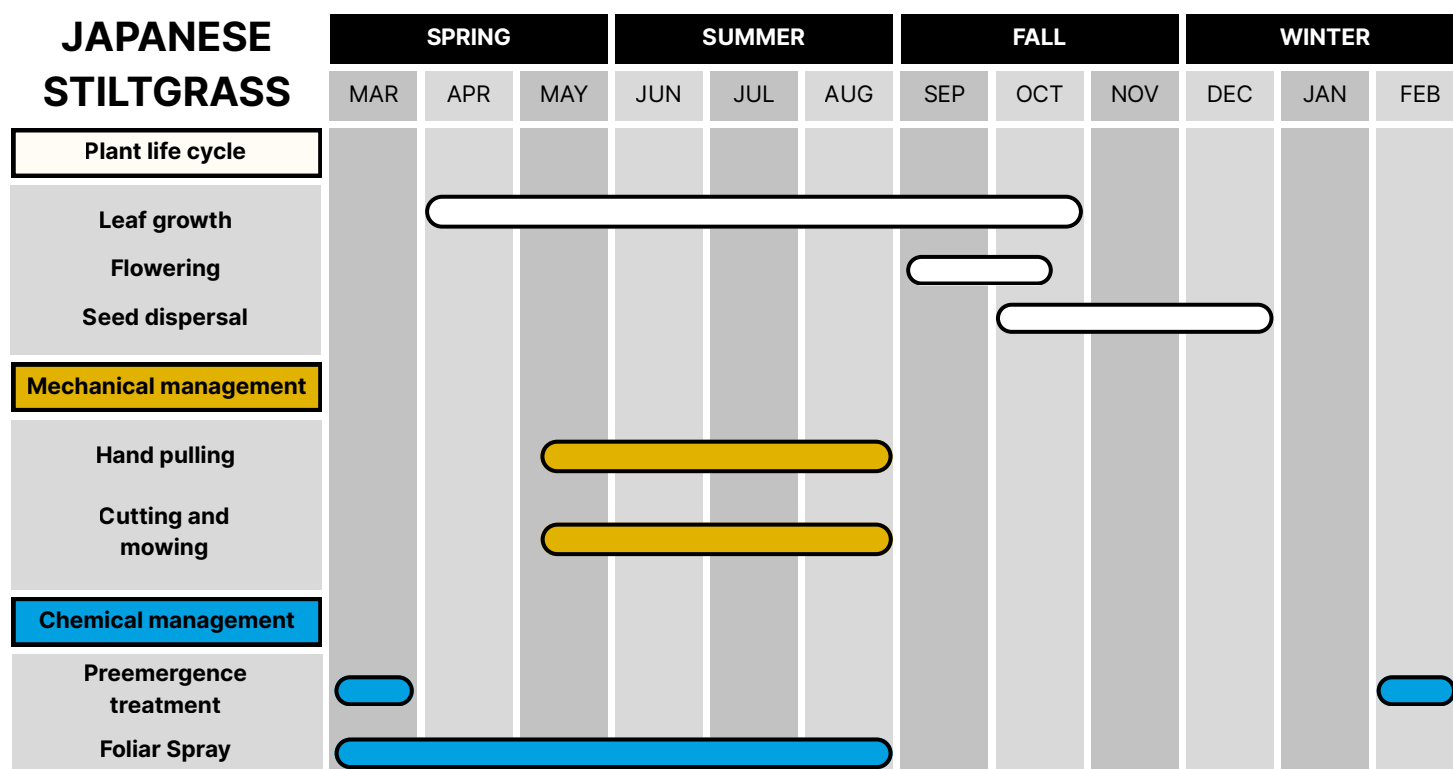
**Identifying Features:** Japanese Stiltgrass grows to a height of 1-3 feet and can be identified by the following characteristics:

- Stems are green, branched, and slender.
- Nodes and internodes on the stem are hairless.
- Stems change color throughout the season: young stems may be reddish, while mature stems turn purple to brown at the end of the growing season.
- Stems also produce stolons (horizontal stems) that make patches denser.
- Stems are supported by stilt-like aboveground roots, which gives the plant its name.
- Leaves are arranged alternately on the stem.
- Leaves are flat, lance-shaped, and have a pale, silvery midrib.
- Leaves are 1-3 inches long and feel smooth when rubbed in both directions.
- Flower spikes emerge in late summer or early fall.
- Each flower spike is 1-2 inches long and has 1-3 branches.
- Seeds are small and husked, and seed heads are thin.

Japanese Stiltgrass looks similar to both Whitegrass and Pennsylvania Smartweed, but has different growth habits and hair placement than these species.

# Japanese Stiltgrass

*Microstegeum vimineum*



This chart is based on USDA plant hardiness zone 6. Plant growth and treatment times vary by region.

## Management methods:

**Mechanical** - In small patches, hand pulling can be very effective if all stem pieces are removed. Pulling plants in mid to late summer reduces the risk of seeds germinating when roots are removed. Mowing and string trimming can be helpful, either as a standalone method or in combination with herbicide. Mowing or string trimming is most effective in late summer before seed heads have fully developed.

**Chemical** - A combination of pre-emergent and post-emergent herbicides are the most effective control for this species. Pre-emergence herbicides prevent seeds from germinating. Foliar spray of post-emergence herbicides can be applied when the plant is fully leafed out.

**Disclaimer** - Selecting the best management method for this plant can be site and context-specific. Check with your local USDA Service Center or University Extension agent to explore your options and determine what is most appropriate for your location and situation.

**Management information:** Dispose of cut plant materials where they cannot resprout. If seeds are present, bag them and dispose of them in a landfill.

Personal protective equipment is recommended when removing any invasive species, and especially when using herbicides. Always follow label instructions when using herbicide.



■ Species present

■ Absent

# Midwest Invasive Plant Fact Sheet #6 – References and Supplemental Information

## Japanese Stiltgrass

### *Microstegeum vimineum*

#### Look-Alike Species:

- Whitegrass, *Leersia virginica*
- This species forms (supplemental photos 1 and 2) clumps instead of carpets (like Japanese Stiltgrass) and has downward pointing hairs on the node. Whitegrass leaves are also longer than Stiltgrass leaves.



#### Look-Alike Species:

- Pennsylvania Smartweed, *Persicaria pensylvanica*
- Pennsylvania Smartweed (supplemental photos 3 and 4) has similar leaves to Japanese Stiltgrass, but this (native) species have very distinctive pink-white flowers.



## References and Additional Reading:

- Ohio State University Extension. 2022. [Controlling Non-Native Invasive Plants: Japanese Stiltgrass](#). [Identification, mechanical, and chemical control information].
- PennState Extension. 2025. [Japanese Stiltgrass](#). [Identification and chemical control information].
- North Carolina State Extension. 2023. [Japanese Stiltgrass Identification and Management](#). [Identification, mechanical, and chemical control information].
- Midwest Invasive Plant Network. 2025. [New Invasive Plants of the Midwest Fact Sheet – Japanese Stiltgrass \(Microstegeum vimineum\)](#). [Identification, mechanical, and chemical control information].

**Photo Credits:** Photo 1: iNaturalist, Cindy Perkovich; Photo 2: iNaturalist, daksu; Photo 3: J.C. Neal; Photo 4: University of Massachusetts Amherst Weed Herbarium; Range map: USDA PLANTS database; Supplemental photo 1: iNaturalist, Cindy Clark; Supplemental photo 2: Elizabeth Fairweather; Supplemental photo 3: iNaturalist, Y. Liu; Supplemental photo 4: iNaturalist, F. LaBry.

## Resources:

- Find your local [University Extension Program](#)
- Find your local [USDA NRCS Service Center](#)
- Find your local [Soil and Water Conservation District](#)
- Check out other invasive plant fact sheets
- Check out Pollinator Partnership's agriculture page

## Acknowledgements:

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