

FIG. 3.

WILD OAT.

Avena fatua (L).

An annual weed with erect and smooth stems. The leaves and stems are covered with white bloom, which gives a peculiar white-green color to the whole plant. The head forms a loose panicle, with nodding and spreading branchlets. The awn is long and bent, and covered with brown hairs. It is bent most when dry; but if moistened, it uncoils and wriggles around, thus causing the seed to move appreciable distances.

The principal points of differences between the wild and cultivated oat are (1) In the former the chaff is thick and hairy, while in the latter it is thin and hairless; and (2) The wild oat has a long, stiff awn which is bent and twisted when dry, while the cultivated oat either has a much smaller and less stiff awn or none at all. An average plant produces about 800 seeds.

Time of flowering, July. Time of seeding, July-August.

Dispersal—conveyed from place to place by threshing machines, and as an impurity in seed-grain.

Wild Oats are at home in any soil that will grow cereals, and they ripen their seeds among almost any cereal crop. The seeds possess wonderful vitality, some of them remaining buried in the soil for years and germinating as soon as they are brought under favorable conditions.

Eradication.—On a field infested with wild oats, cereal crops should be dropped out of the rotation as far as possible; and hoed crops, soiling crops, hay, and pasture should take their place. To get the land under grass, it should be fallowed during part of the season, the cultivation being frequent and shallow, to destroy all seeds that may have germinated in the upper layer of the soil. The land can then be sown with winter wheat and seeded, or with an early variety of barley, which should be cut on the green side. The treatment mentioned is suitable for pasture land, or land which has produced a hay or soiling crop during the forepart of the season.