

## A Northern Nevada Homeowner's Guide to Identifying and Managing Buckhorn Plantain

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**Other common names:** Narrow-leaf plantain, ribwort plantain, English plantain, ribgrass.

**Scientific name:** *Plantago lanceolata*

**Family:** Plantaginaceae

**Description:** A perennial that has long stems with flowering spikes, buckhorn plantain can be differentiated from broadleaf plantain by its long, narrow leaves and shorter flower spike at the end of a longer stalk.

**Leaves:** Narrow with sharp tips, 3 to 12 inches long from the base of the plant. Leaves usually have short hairs and 3 to 5 prominent parallel veins. Leaves grow in a rosette (ground-hugging form; see photo bottom right).

**Stems:** Very short, at the base of the plant. May not be noticeable.

**Flowers:** Small and whitish, in 1- to 2-inch-long spikes along 12- to 18+-inch-long bare stalks. The flowers open in a ring at the base of the spike and open progressively to the tip, giving a characteristic donut appearance. Blooms from late spring through summer.

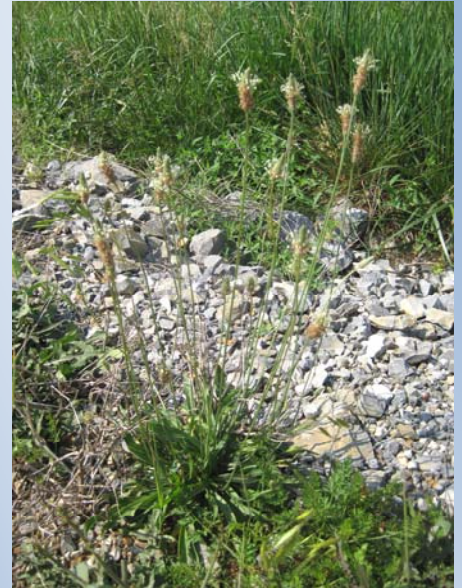
**Roots:** Taproot; can be branched.

**Native to:** Europe; naturalized over much of the United States

**Where it grows:** Roadsides, lawns, gardens, vacant lots, cultivated fields, pastures and other disturbed sites

**Life cycle:** Perennial (grows back each year from the roots)

**Reproduction:** Produces seed and regrows from the roots



Typical plant growing in disturbed site.

(Photo by S. Donaldson)



Rosettes grow close to the ground

(Photo by W. Hanson Mazet).

**Control methods:** Control of plantains can be difficult once they have become established, as plants can regrow from the crown. Continual monitoring and removal of new seedlings is essential to minimize spread.

**Mechanical:** Dig, hoe or pull repeatedly, removing as much of the root as possible. Use mechanical control methods prior to formation of flowers. Mulching with landscape fabric or more than 3 inches of organic mulch can be effective in controlling seedlings but will not control mature plants. Mowing is not effective, as plants will regrow and flower close to the ground.

**Cultural:** Plant desirable vegetation that will shade the area and reduce germination and growth of young plants. For infestations in turf, keep the grasses as healthy and competitive as possible by aerating, mowing high and watering properly. Prevent the spread of seeds by clipping blooms.

**Biological:** None.

**Chemical:** Apply broadleaf-selective herbicides on young plants in the fall for best results.

## References:

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- Elmore, C.L., D.W. Cudney and M.E. McGiffin. Jr. 2007. Plantains. UC Davis ANR Publication #7478, <http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7478.html>.
- Wall, A. and R. Whitesides. 2008. Buckhorn Plantain. Utah State University Cooperative Extension, Ag/Weeds/2008-01pr, [http://extension.usu.edu/files/publications/publication/AG\\_Weeds\\_2008-01pr.pdf](http://extension.usu.edu/files/publications/publication/AG_Weeds_2008-01pr.pdf).
- Whitson, Tom D. (editor). 2002. Weeds of the West. University of Wyoming, Jackson, Wyoming.



Seedlings have long, narrow leaves.  
(Photo courtesy of J. DiTomaso, UC Davis)



The leaves are long and narrow, with 3 to 5 obvious veins.



The flowers form a ring at the base of the spike and open sequentially.

(Above two photos by S. Donaldson)

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