

African fountain grass

Pennisetum setaceum



African fountain grass has been widely planted as an ornamental in Australia and overseas. African fountain grass is a garden escapee and native to drier parts of northern and eastern Africa and south-western Asia. It is a highly invasive, fire-adapted coloniser that readily out-competes native plants. It increases the intensity and spread of fires, resulting in severe damage to native dry forest species. African fountain grass produces large numbers of wind-dispersed seeds—its spread could be rapid and almost impossible to prevent.

Legal requirements

African fountain grass is a category 3 restricted invasive plant under the *Biosecurity Act 2014*. It must not be given away, sold or released into the environment. Under this Act everyone has a general biosecurity obligation (GBO) to take reasonable and practical steps to minimise the risks associated with invasive plants under their control.



Queensland
Government

Local governments must have a biosecurity plan that covers invasive plants in their area. This plan may include actions to be taken on African fountain grass. Some of these actions may be required under local laws. Contact your local government for more information.

Description

African fountain grass is an erect, densely-tufted perennial that grows to 1 m tall. Leaf blades are linear, convolute, folded or flat and mostly 8–30 cm long. The florescence (seed head) is a pink, feathery spike, 10–25 cm long and 1.2–1.6 cm wide. It is a perennial plant that may live for up to 20 years. Flowering occurs over a prolonged period from spring through summer.

Life cycle

Most seeds germinate in late spring through to early summer. Evidence from Hawaii, where it is also an invasive plant, suggests that seeds may survive for more than six years in the soil seed bank.

Methods of spread

African fountain grass is mainly spread by people for ornamental planting. The seed is dispersed by the wind, flowing water and seeds attached to fur and vehicles.

Control

Managing African fountain grass

The GBO requires a person to take reasonable and practical steps to minimise the risks posed by African fountain grass. This factsheet provides information and some options for controlling African fountain grass.

The removal of large areas of African fountain grass may require revegetation of the cleared area to ensure that other plants do not gain a foothold in the disturbed area.

Manual control

Seedlings and smaller plants or small infestations can be hand-pulled, chipped out, bagged, composted or disposed of at the local garbage dump. Wear gloves as the leaves and seed heads can cause skin irritation.

Herbicide control

Herbicide control, such as foliar spray, may be required for larger infestations of African fountain grass.

Before using any herbicide always read the label carefully. All herbicides must be applied strictly in accordance with the directions on the label or the details, conditions and limitations stated in an APVMA permit. If the addition of a wetting agent is recommended, always use a commercial wetting agent or surfactant as per its label instructions.

Some herbicides permitted for African fountain grass control have withholding periods and significant ongoing management requirements in grazing and dairying situations. All land managers that have or may have dairy or beef cattle on their property at any stage in the future should carefully consider these requirements when determining the suitability of these herbicides for use on their property.

Details of herbicides for the control of African fountain grass are listed in Table 1.

More information

More information is available from your local government office or visit biosecurity.qld.gov.au.



Table 1. Herbicides for the control of African fountain grass

Situation	Application method	Herbicide ¹	Rate	Comments
Pasture, grazed woodlands, agricultural areas prior to sowing, tree and vine crops, agricultural non-crop situations, wasteland, forest and conservation area, roadsides and easements, rights-of-way, commercial and industrial areas, public service areas	Boom spray	Glyphosate 360 g/L	6 L per ha	
Pasture, grazed woodlands, agricultural areas prior to sowing, tree and vine crops, lucerne and agricultural non-crop situations, wasteland, forest and conservation areas, margins of aquatic areas, roadsides and easements, rights-of-way, domestic areas, commercial and industrial areas, turf, playing fields, golf courses, public service areas, areas surrounding agricultural buildings	Spot spraying	Glyphosate 360 g/L	1 L per 100 L water	
	Wiper wick	Glyphosate 360 g/L	3.3 L per 10 L water	
Pasture, grazed woodlands and agricultural non-crop situations, wasteland, forest and conservation areas, roadsides and easements, rights-of-way, commercial and industrial areas	Boom spray	Flupropanate 745 g/L	3 L per ha	DO NOT reseed areas treated with flupropanate until at least 100 mm of leaching rain has fallen
Pasture, grazed woodlands and agricultural non-crop situations, wasteland, forest and conservation areas, roadsides and easements, rights-of-way, commercial and industrial areas, golf courses, public service areas, areas surrounding agricultural buildings	Spot spray	Flupropanate 745 g/L	300 mL per 100 L water	DO NOT use in channels, drains or watercourses
	Wiper wick	Flupropanate 745 g/L	500 mL per 10 L water	DO NOT spray near desirable susceptible trees DO NOT apply above 3 L per ha to steeply sloping sites
Pasture, grazed woodlands and agricultural non-crop situations, wasteland, forest and conservation areas, roadsides and easements, rights-of-way, commercial and industrial areas	Seed set suppression Boom spray Tank mix	Flupropanate 745 g/L + Glyphosate 360 g/L	3 L per ha + 380–630 mL per ha	DO NOT reseed areas treated with flupropanate until at least 100 mm of leaching rain has fallen
Pasture, grazed woodlands and agricultural non-crop situations, wasteland, forest and conservation areas, roadsides and easements, rights-of-way, commercial and industrial areas, golf courses, public service areas, areas surrounding agricultural buildings	Seed set suppression Spot spray Tank mix	Flupropanate 745 g/L + Glyphosate 360 g/L	300 mL + 335 mL per 100 L water	DO NOT use in channels drains or watercourses DO NOT spray near desirable susceptible trees
	Seed set suppression Wiper wick	Flupropanate 745 g/L + Glyphosate 360 g/L	500 ml per 10 L water + 330 ml per 10 L water	DO NOT apply above 3 L per ha to steeply sloping sites Suppression of seed set is only successful if application is made several months before seed set

¹Read APVMA permit PER9792 for rates for products containing glyphosate 450 g/L or glyphosate 540 g/L. Read carefully the section related to 'other introduced tussock grasses' as well as general instructions. The herbicides listed in Table 1 are permitted under APVMA PER9792 (expires 30 November 2025). Persons who wish to prepare for use and/or use products for the purposes specified in this permit must read or have read to them, the details and conditions of the permit. The permit is available on the APVMA website apvma.gov.au

Read the label carefully before use and always use the herbicide in accordance with the directions on the label.

Fact sheets are available from biosecurity.qld.gov.au. The control methods recommended should be used in accordance with the restrictions (federal and state legislation, and local government laws) directly or indirectly related to each control method. These restrictions may prevent the use of one or more of the methods referred to, depending on individual circumstances. While every care is taken to ensure the accuracy of this information, the department does not invite reliance upon it, nor accept responsibility for any loss or damage caused by actions based on it.

