

# Mossman river grass

Mossman burr grass

*Cenchrus echinatus*



Mossman river grass competes for moisture, nutrients and light in tropical and subtropical crops. The burrs can reduce wool value and make shearing hazardous. The spines of burrs penetrate hides decreasing the value.

## Legal requirements

Mossman river grass is not a prohibited or restricted invasive plant under the *Biosecurity Act 2014*. However, by law, everyone has a general biosecurity obligation (GBO) to take reasonable and practical steps to minimise the risks associated with invasive plants under their control.

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

## Description

Mossman river grass or Mossman burr grass is an annual grass with prostrate or erect stems forming loose tufts.

Seedlings are erect, robust, hairless and have bright mid-green leaves. The leaf sheaths are purplish-red, especially in older seedlings.

Mature plants form prostrate or ascending tufts with stout stems up to 90 cm, but mostly up to 60 cm.

The leaves are flat and rather stiff, tapering towards the tip. They are 5–25 cm long and 3–12 mm wide.

The ligule (where the leaf blade becomes the leaf shaft to wrap around the stem) is a rim of short hairs, with a few scattered hairs on the leaf margin at the leaf base. The joints along the stems are hairless.



Seed heads, borne on several stems per plant, are spike-like clusters of 12–14 burrs. Each burr (0.5–1 cm across) is a ball of stout, broad, spiny bristles that are joined together at the base. The burrs fall off readily when ripe and cling tightly to clothing, animal hides and human skin. They can also penetrate bare feet.

It flowers mostly during summer and autumn, will flower year round in moist tropical environment.

Mossman river grass mainly spreads by burr seeds and by burrs attached to animals, clothing and bags, machinery and vehicles, in fodder and soil.

## Habitat and distribution

Mossman river grass is native to Central America and southern North America.

It prefers sandy soils including at the beach, footpaths, roadsides, lawns, parks and disturbed areas. Mossman river grass is present in dryer inland areas of Australia.

## Control

The most effective control method is to destroy young plants before they set seed. This can be done by cultivation, pulling by hand, burning off with heat using flame throwers or steam jets, or by spraying with herbicide.

Herbicides for the control of Mossman river grass (out of crop) are provided in Table 1 below. Many selective herbicides are registered for in-crop situations but not for non-crop situations. The herbicides listed below are permitted for the specified situations under APVMA permit PER11463 (expires 30/06/2023). Contact Biosecurity Queensland or your local government for additional in-crop information.

## Further information

Further information is available from your local government office, or by contacting Biosecurity Queensland on 13 25 23 or visit [biosecurity.qld.gov.au](http://biosecurity.qld.gov.au).

**Table 1. Herbicides for the control of Mossman river grass**

| Situation   | Herbicide   | Rate  | Comments   |
|---|---|---|--|
| Non-agricultural areas, domestic and public service areas, commercial and industrial areas, bushland/native forests, roadsides, rights-of-way, vacant lots, wastelands, wetlands, dunal and coastal areas | Glyphosate 360 g/L (e.g. Glyphosate 360) and other formulations | 500–700 mL/100 L water<br>For other formulations consult table and formulae of PER11463 | Spot spray<br>Consult label and permit for details and critical comments |
|   |   | 1 part to 2 parts water   | Wick wiper<br>Consult label and permit for details and critical comments |
|   | Haloxypop 130 g/L (e.g. Gallant West)                           | 100 mL/100 L water plus wetting agent or spray oil or 1L/ha                             | Spot spray<br>Consult label and permit for details and critical comments |
|   | Haloxypop 512 g/L (e.g. Verdict 520)                            | 25 mL/100 L water plus wetting agent or spray oil or 250 mL/ha                          |  |
|   | Fluazifop 212 g/L (e.g. Fusilier)                               | 100 mL/100 L water plus wetting agent or spray oil or 1L/ha                             |  |

**Read the label carefully before use. Always use the herbicide in accordance with the directions on the label.**



This fact sheet is developed with funding support from the Land Protection Fund.

Fact sheets are available from Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) service centres and our Customer Service Centre (telephone 13 25 23). Check our website at [biosecurity.qld.gov.au](http://biosecurity.qld.gov.au) to ensure you have the latest version of this fact sheet. The control methods referred to in this fact sheet 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, DAF does not invite reliance upon it, nor accept responsibility for any loss or damage caused by actions based on it.