Himalayan fairy grass

Miscanthus nepalensis

www.weedbusters.org.nz

Family
Poaceae (grass)

Also known as
Nepal silver grass

Where is it originally from?
Nepal/India

What does it look like?
Tall tufted perennial grass (<1 m) with stiff, gradually tapering leaf blades (20-60 cm x 4-10 mm), rough margins, and an obvious pale green mid-rib. Drooping, fanshaped, golden-brown flowerhead (10-20cm long) is on a long stem and develops into a mass of wind-spread seeds (1-1.5 mm).

Are there any similar species?
Chionochloa species have similar shape and flowerheads.

Why is it weedy?
Spreads easily from seed and from fragments of its root system, and forms dense infestations that crowd out other plants and prevent native species germinating. It spreads into natural areas from roadsides and wasteland, and also grows well on open cliffs. Forms dense infestations, and develops extensive root systems below the ground, making it hard to control.

How does it spread?
Spreads both by fluffy seed that is blown by wind or transported by tyres, shoes and on clothing, and vegetatively from the extensive shallow rhizome system, and fragments that break off this.

What damage does it do?
Creates dense thickets and forms extensive infestations that prevent the growth and germination of other plants. Rapidly colonises disturbed or open areas, and can invade large areas of bushland after fire, outcompeting all native species.

Which habitats is it likely to invade?
Waste areas, spreading from roadsides, and forest margins and open cliffs.

What can I do to get rid of it?
1. Physical removal - First remove flower and seed heads, wrap or securely bag for disposal. Dig out isolated plants (all year round). Grubbing is a good option for fibrous deep rooted plants. If grubbing you'll need to ensure all the root crown is removed. Dispose of at refuse transfer station or burn.

What can I do to stop it coming back?
Avoid burning as this increases its growth, vigour and seed production. Site needs to be checked regularly for regrowth and seedlings.

Photo: Carolyn Lewis

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Photo: Trevor James