

Buffalo grass

Stenotaphrum secundatum

Family

Gramineae (grass)

Where is it originally from?

Tropical America and Africa

What does it look like?

Dense, mat-forming, coarse perennial grass with long, stout, usually reddish stolons, and occasionally with thin rhizomes. Flattened, strap-like dull greyish to bluish green leaves (40-100 x 4-12 mm) are alternate with a hooded tip that splits when flattened, blades folded at base, with a tiny fringe of hairs where the leaf joins the stem, and auricles (extensions at the base of the leaf blade clasp the stem) are missing. Finely striped green and white sheath is large, broad, usually has a reddish tinge and hairs (3-4 mm) at the blade junction. Seedhead is a rigid, flattened, brittle spike, seeds are usually aligned to one side.

Are there any similar species?

Axonopus affinis, *Paspalum distichum*, and *Pennisetum clandestinum* are all similar.

Why is it weedy?

Grows rapidly, forming dense mats, and fragments are effectively dispersed. Tolerates damp to drought conditions, hot to moderate cool, salt, wind, damage and grazing, and most soils, but is intolerant of heavy frost and moderate shade.

How does it spread?

Stolon fragments and occasionally seed are moved by livestock (seeds in dung), contaminated machinery and boots, dumped vegetation, soil movement, and road graders. Also spreads from coastal lawns where it is sometimes planted.

What damage does it do?

Forms dense, tall, long-lived mats that smother and exclude all other species except kikuyu. It can become the terminal species in weed successional process. It can also help fire spread.

Which habitats is it likely to invade?

Disturbed shrubland, short tussockland, fernland, herbfield, bare land, and coastal fringes, especially in warmer areas.

What can I do to get rid of it?

1. Spray: 520g/L haloxyfop-P-methyl (150ml/10L + penetrant) for spraying only grasses, or glyphosate (100ml/10L + penetrant) during drought or other stress, which will kill all species present. Do not spray after heavy frost.

2. Weed mat (small, isolated spots only): leave for 2-3 months. Suitable around plantings but does not prevent reinvasion.

What can I do to stop it coming back?

Physical removal largely ineffective, creates disposal problem. Maintain rolling control front, check for occasionally seedlings. Planting belts of dense, 1 m+ tall, shady, non-grass species can block spread into at-risk habitats.



www.weedbusters.org.nz



Photo: Trevor James



Photo: Trevor James



Photo: Trevor James