

Category A—High

Uruguayan pampas grass (*Cortaderia selloana*)

Identification and Impacts



Photo credit: J.M. DiTomaso



Photo credit: J. Ruter

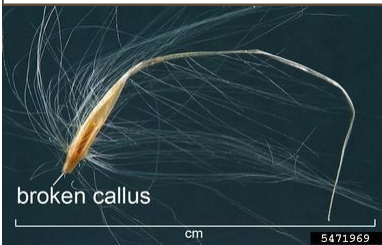


Photo Credit: D. Walters and C. Southwick.

Key ID Tips

- Dense, feathery inflorescence.
- Leaves are long and smooth except for the dense hairs at the ligule.
- Seeds have hairs and long calluses.

Origin

Native to South American in low elevation subtropical grasslands.

Description

Uruguayan pampas grass is a fast growing bunch grass with densely tufted branches and long basal leaves. Leaves can be bluish-green in color with a

smooth upper surface at the base and hairs on the lower surface near the collar. Leaf tips are bristled and curled and margins can be rough, stiff, and sharp. Flowers are in a dense, showy, and feathery panicle and can appear purple, to brown, to white. Seeds are covered in hairs with a long callus tip. They develop lateral roots that facilitate vegetative expansion of the plants.

Biology

Pampas grass prefers disturbed areas, roads, and grasslands. They form dense, tall bunches that outcompete native vegetation and are abundant seed producers, with a single plant able to produce up to 100,000 seeds, which can travel long distances by wind. Seeds, however, only survive for 6 months in the field, with germination in the fall after the first rainfall. It is drought and frost tolerant and grows well in intense sunlight. Its vigorous root system allows it to spread vegetatively.

Locations

No populations have been documented on the Navajo Nation.

Ecological Threat and Management Concerns

Pampas grass can grow vigorously, quickly crowding out native vegetation and reducing habitat and rangeland quality. Its dense, fibrous lateral roots allow them to outcompete native grasses. Its sharp leaf margins can cut wildlife, livestock, and humans. It can also make it difficult to remove. Its tolerance of a wide range of habitat conditions contribute to their invasiveness.



Photo credit: J. Ruter

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Management Recommendations

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Additional safety measures and limitations may apply to each method. Refer to the [Navajo Nation Integrated Weed Management Plan](#) for more information.

Mechanical/Manual Removal

Hand pulling can prevent the spread of pampas grass. Removal of the entire crown and top section of the roots is needed to prevent resprouting. Removed plants should be disposed of immediately as they can take root and reestablish in moist soil. Mechanical removal with excavators and backhoes can also be effective for large infestations. Any manual treatments should use gloves, helmets, and other protective gear as leaves can cause injuries.

Biological

No biological control organisms are available for use on the Navajo Nation.

Cultural Control

Grazing and fire are not recommended and are not effective for controlling pampas grass. Mulching bare sites and restoring native plant communities is effective at reducing seedling emergency and spread.

Chemical

Use of herbicides can be effective. Refer to the product labels for application rates, timing, and approved application methods.

Recommended herbicides include:

- Imazapyr

References

DiTomaso, J.M., G.B. Kyser et al. 2013. *Weed Control in Natural Areas in the Western United States*. Weed Research and Information Center. University of California. 544 pp.

USDA, NRCS. 2023. PLANTS Database. Available at <https://plants.sc.egov.usda.gov/>. National Plant Data Team, Greensboro, NC 27401-4901 USA.



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