Mason County Noxious Weed Control

Grass Family

Pampas Grass

Cortaderia selloana

Identification Tips

- Large perennial bunch grass that grows up to 13 feet tall. Forms a large clump known as a tussock.
- Its long and narrow basal leaves are gray-green or bluish-green in color with sharp and serrated edges, often having a prominent midrib.
- Upright stems grow from the tussock, and plumes of white, silver, cream, pink, or violet flowers grow from their tips.
- Plants have dense and fibrous roots that grow from shallow rhizomes and vigorously spread up to 13 feet in diameter, and 11.5 feet deep.

Non-Regulated Class C Noxious Weed: Control Recommended

Biology

- Pampas grass flowers in the late summer.
- Plants either have all female flowers or all have pollen-producing bisexual (called "perfect") flowers. Nurseries have selected more for female plants due to their showier flowers, but sometimes bisexual plants are produced, which allows for the creation of viable seed. One plume can produce up to 100,000 seeds.
- Seeds are wind-dispersed and seeds from a female plant can travel long distances. Seeds produced from bisexual plants generally fall closer to their tussocks.
- New plants can also produce from root fragments.

The basal leaves of Pampas grass often have a prominent midrib, such as the one shown to the right.

Impacts

- Pampas grass is highly competitive with native vegetation when a population is established and can outcompete planted tree saplings in forestry settings.
- Excessive buildup of dead leaves and stems can create a fire hazard in dry conditions.

Distribution

- Native to mid-elevation regions in South America, pampas grass was originally transported to California in 1848 as an ornamental and for decorating hats and parade floats. It later became a popular ornamental and plant for erosion control in the United States.
- Can invade disturbed and undisturbed habitats when it escapes cultivation, including: abandoned farmland; roadsides; logged forests; coastal sand dunes bluffs, marshes and wetlands; and inland riparian areas.
- In Mason County, one small population was found along the North Bay shoreline.

QUESTIONS? Contact Mason County Noxious Weed Control at:
(360) 427-9670 ext. 592 or patriciag@co.mason.wa.us
https://extension.wsu.edu/mason/natural-resources/noxious-weed-program/

03/05/2021 K Hall-Wieckert

What You Can Do

While there is no legal requirement for controlling pampas grass in Mason County, the Board recognizes this plant as invasive and is collecting information and providing education on control. The Board encourages and recommends control of existing populations especially in natural lands and forests.

Control Methods

The leaves of pampas grass are very sharp, so it is important to protect yourself when handling plants. Gloves and long sleeves are recommended.

Choose control methods that are best suited to your site. Keep the prevention of pampas grass establishment in mind when choosing your control methods.

Prevention

Although pampas grass can still be found in local nurseries, it is recommended that you do not intentionally plant it.

If you already have pampas grass, take steps to remove plants. If you do not plan to remove the plant, cut and bag the flower plumes and dispose of properly. Reduce soil disturbance around existing pampas grass plants to prevent invasion. When soil is disturbed, replant with desirable vegetation or mulch heavily.

Report any escaped plants on natural lands and forests to Mason County Noxious Weed Control.

Mechanical

For removing established plants with large tussocks, pulaskis, mattocks, or shovels are the safest and most effective tools. Chainsaws and weedeaters may be used to expose the base of the plants in order to more easily remove them.

If leaving pampas grass on site, turn the uprooted tussocks upside down so the roots are exposed to the air. Always cut, bag, and dispose of flower plumes properly.

Removal by heavy equipment is also an effective control method for large populations, however feasibility depends on accessibility, labor, and funding.

Jubata Grass (*Cortaderia jubata*) is a Class-C lookalike.

Jubata grass looks very similar to pampas grass, which is the showier of the two species and is more often planted in landscapes. Due to the similarity in appearance of jubata and pampas grass, and that jubata grass is a listed noxious weed in nearby states, it is also listed as a noxious weed in Washington.

Try these neat, non-invasive alternatives!

There are a variety of non-invasive ornamentals that could be good alternatives to Pampas grass, but below are two that caught our eye.

muhly grass (*Muhlenbergia* sp.)
Graceful plumes up to 7ft tall with evergreen leaves; drough-tolerant

New Zealand flax (*Phormium* sp.)
Large and colorful spiky plant with sword-like leaves

Manual Control

Seedlings can be handpulled or dug out, but care must be taken to remove the entire crown and top section of its roots.

Chemical

Choose a formulation that is appropriate for your site. Follow the label exactly as written and use only at rate prescribed. Do not apply herbicide over or near water bodies.

A combination treatment of cutting down the top growth of plant and subsequently treating regrowth when its about 7 to 8 inches tall with a systemic postemergence herbicide such as imazapyr can be effective. It is best applied in late summer or fall and after flowering when translocation of herbicide to the rhizomes is at its peak. This method reduces the amount of herbicide used.

Contact the Mason County Noxious Weed Control Board with questions about herbicide application.