

Buffelgrass (*Pennisetum ciliare*) Identification

Buffelgrass can look dramatically different depending on the time of year. It can be lush and green after good rains, but quickly dries down to a straw colored plant. Below are a few characteristics that will help you to correctly identify buffelgrass.



GREEN BUFFELGRASS.
Inset shows inflorescence (seed heads).



Volunteer removing DRY BUFFELGRASS.



BOTTLE BRUSH SEEDHEADS:
Buffelgrass has a very distinct flower that looks like a bottle brush. The flower can range in color from reddish or purplish brown when seeds are young to a tan color when seeds are mature.



ROUGH RACHIS:
Once the seeds fall from the plant, the rachis (central stem where the seeds were attached) is very rough to the touch.



HAIRY LIGULE:
Tiny whitish/blond hairs can be seen at the base of the leaf where it diverges from the stem.

Why is buffelgrass a problem? Buffelgrass, an introduced invasive grass, forms dense stands, crowding out native plants and animals, and bringing fire to an ecosystem that is not meant to burn. Please visit www.buffelgrass.org for more information.



Invades undisturbed desert habitat



Competes with saguaros and other native vegetation



Fuel load is 3x higher than typical desert, leading to large wildfires



Inhibits animal movement, alters habitat and displaces wildlife forage



Wildfire kills desert plants & animals, and poses a major safety hazard to adjoining urban areas

What do you do if you have buffelgrass on your property?

There are two main ways to remove buffelgrass effectively; if the plant is green, herbicides can be used to kill the plant. Herbicide only works on actively growing plants, thus it has to be green when you spray it. If less than 50% of the plant is green manual removal is the best method. With any removal technique, a follow up treatment will have to be performed for the next 3-5 growing seasons, thus removing the seed that is still in the soil.

Chemical Control (Herbicide):

- Plants must be at least 50% green and actively growing for herbicide to be effective; this usually occurs during the monsoon rains, but can also occur in the winter if climatic conditions are right
- Glyphosate (the active ingredient in Roundup ®) is very effective at killing buffelgrass
- Follow the label directions; a 2% solution works well
- Spray enough herbicide to coat all the green leaves, but not to the point that it drips off
- Adding a dye to the chemical solution can help you to avoid spraying non-target species

Manual Control (Pulling):

- Mowing alone is not an effective control method; this actually stimulates new growth
- A digging tool is needed to loosen the soil around the plant so that it can be pulled up without leaving the base of the plant behind; if part of the plant remains in the soil, it will resprout
- Soil bars (aka Caliche bars, digging bars, rock picks) work well; wedge soil bar point into soil at base of plant at an angle, push down on soil bar to lever plant out of ground
- Shake dirt off of roots and place in a heavy duty trash bag
- If a blanket of seeds remains, sweeping them up will minimize the # of seedlings next season

Disposal:

Place plants that are pulled up into trash bags and place with other trash items to be collected by the city.

For a great hands-on opportunity to learn how to identify & correctly remove buffelgrass, nothing beats volunteering for a morning with the Weedwackers! For more info, contact your regional coordinator.

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