

PAMPAS GRASS



Pampas grass (*Cortaderia selloana*) is a tall, coarse grass with an attractive flower head. It is a native of South America. Two other related species, pink pampas (*Cortaderia jubata*) and toetoe (*Cortaderia richardii*) are found in New Zealand and Tasmania where they are important weeds.

Pampas grass is frequently grown as a garden ornamental plant but has sometimes escaped from cultivation and invaded disturbed areas of urban bushland. In summer the dense tufts of head leaves become a fire hazard. It is a serious weed of forests, parks and bushland in New Zealand and parts of Tasmania and New South Wales.

There is a possibility that pampas grass would be a big nuisance to asthma and hay fever sufferers as the plant produces a huge volume of pollen.

Pampas grass does well in damp and disturbed areas but seldom survives in shade.

The young plant is readily grazed by livestock. Therefore pampas grass has little potential as a weed on farms. It is sometimes grown as a windbreak and for stabilising areas subjected to wind erosion.

Pampas grass forms a large tussock one metre or more in diameter and over two metres high. It has an attractive fluffy plumed seed head carried on a stem. This can reach four metres in height.

The plume may vary in colour from white to pink or violet.

Pampas grass is a long lived perennial. It is mainly spread by splitting the clump. However there are two sexual forms of the plant: hermaphrodite (bisexual) and female. The female plant does not normally form viable seeds on its own, however when fertilized by pollen from a hermaphrodite plant it produces 100,000 or more viable seeds from each flower head. Hermaphrodites rarely produce seeds. Seeds can spread by wind for distances of up to 25km.

Female plants have large fluffy plumes which are preferred by gardeners to the smaller more compact plumes of hermaphrodites.

Until recently it was thought that only female plants existed in W.A. However, hermaphrodite plants have since been found widely throughout the SW of the state. As a result, pampas grass may be able to spread rapidly and has the potential to become a serious weed.

Because pampas grass can grow from old up-rooted plants, do not dump live pampas grass material at the rubbish tip or elsewhere as this may help it to spread.

If pampas grass becomes widespread, it would be difficult to control without damaging neighbouring plants.

Control

Small plants (less than 20cm tall)

KNAPSACK:

1. Spray foliage with glyphosate* (360 g/litre or 450 g/litre) at the rate of 100 ml glyphosate plus 25 ml of Pulse Penetrant™** per 10 litres of water per 100 m². Spray until foliage is thoroughly wet.
2. Research results indicate that Fusilade 212™*** (212 g/l fluazifop-p) at 4 litres per hectare plus 1% spray oil shows promising selective control of young plants (or 50 mls of Fusilade 212™ plus 100 mls of spraying oil per 10 litres of water). This treatment is preferred where native vegetation is present and where the use of glyphosate would bare the area and encourage further germination of pampas seedlings.

* Various manufacturers ** Monsanto Aust. Ltd

Large plants

KNAPSACK:

Spray foliage until thoroughly wet, using glyphosate (360 g/l or 450 g/l) at the rate of 200 ml glyphosate plus 25 ml Pulse Penetrant™ per 10 litres of water.

POWER SPRAYERS:

Spray foliage until thoroughly wet, using glyphosate (450 g/l) at the rate of 1 litre in 100 litres water. Add 250 ml Pulse Penetrant™.

TIMING

Spraying should be done before the end of February to prevent seed formation. Burning the dead residues after spraying helps.

Plants should be checked for regrowth and re-sprayed if necessary.

*** ICI Crop Care

Further information

For further information on the recognition, ecology and control of pampas grass contact the Agriculture Protection Board, Baron-Hay Court,

South Perth 6151. Telephone 368 3333 or any country office of the A.P.B. or the Department of Agriculture.