



FOUNTAIN GRASS

(Pennisetum setaceum)

A popular landscape plant but
a dangerous invasive weed



In 2020, Fountain Grass was listed as an Arizona Noxious Weed. This prohibits its sale or importation into the state.

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The Problem

Fountain Grass is a nonnative plant used as an ornamental landscape grass. Seeds easily spread and invade neighborhoods, roadsides, washes, and natural areas.



Fountain Grass pushes out native plants and wildlife, taking water from riparian areas and increasing the risk of catastrophic wildfires.



Most Phoenix and Tucson area communities now prohibit the use of fountain grass in landscapes.



How to Identify Fountain Grass

Fountain Grass has a distinctive upright and graceful form with long feathery flower spikes at the end of the stems. Leaves are narrow and flat to V-shaped. Plants grow to 6 feet.

The blooming spikes are 6 to 12 inches long and have purplish to bright green bristles with no visible seeds.

The stems all grow from crown tissue just below the ground surface. Each year the base diameter increases and the stems become more numerous.



Fountain Grass spike. Photo courtesy Michael Chamberland



An AZNPS volunteer spot-spraying fountaingrass in Cargodera Canyon.

Control

Fountain Grass infestations can form dense stands. Mowing is not recommended as it stimulates more growth from the crown.

Remove individual plants by digging out all of the crown tissue at the base of the stems just below the surface.

Large stands of fountain grass may require chemical treatment.* Glyphosate herbicide (e.g. RoundUp) can be spot-sprayed on green plant tissue. Respraying of plants is often necessary due to regrowth from surviving crown tissue. Pre-emergent herbicide treatment is not recommended.

**Be sure to follow proper safety protocols when using herbicide. Use of herbicides is prohibited in Scottsdale Natural Area Open Space (NAOS).*



Deergrass. Photo courtesy Debbie Ballentine (CC v2.0)

Native Alternatives

Both deergrass and chuparosa make handsome accent plants in drip-irrigated or passive water-harvest landscapes.

Deergrass (*Muhlenbergia rigens*)

Native Arizona grass is great as an accent plant and good for pollinators. Grows to 6 feet tall.

Chuparosa (*Justicia californica*)

Native flowering shrub that attracts butterflies and hummingbirds. Grows 3 to 6 feet tall.



Chuparosa. Photo courtesy Tony Knight



Questions & Comments:

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Join our volunteer efforts to remove and control fountain grass in wildlands:

aznps.com

btarboretum.org

friendsofthetonto.org

mcdowellsonoran.org



Chuparosa is a beautiful native alternatives to fountain grass (see inside for more information). Photo courtesy Tony Knight