

African Lovegrass *Eragrostis curvula*



African Lovegrass is a highly invasive, perennial grass that readily forms monocultures in pasture and native vegetation, especially in disturbed areas.

It is a declared weed under the *Landscape South Australia Act 2019*.

Description

African Lovegrass forms large perennial tussocks that grow to between 30 and 120 cm high.

Fine, narrow leaves (3 mm wide) grow to 30 cm high, and usually have **distinctive edges that roll inwards**. Leaf colour varies from dark green to blue-green.

The tall flower stems are slender, without hairs, growing up to 120 cm high. They may be upright, or sometimes arching in a weeping manner. The seed heads are large, openly branched panicles 6 to 30 cm long. The seed heads are often a **distinctive purple-grey colour**, or grey-green colour.

Ripe seed is present from January to March. Seeds germinate in autumn or spring.

Impacts

African Lovegrass produces large, unpalatable tussocks that displace productive plants in pastures. If unchecked, it can spread and form pure, dense infestations.

Sparse, overgrazed pastures are most at risk. It also changes chemical composition in soils and decreases microbial biodiversity.

African Lovegrass is a threat to high value pastures on the Fleurieu Peninsula with significant infestations in some locations.

African Lovegrass can also have significant impacts native flora and fauna. Dense infestations can prevent the germination of other species and very few Australian bird species can utilise the litter for nesting or access the seed from seed heads. It can also increase fire risk and intensity.

Distribution

African Lovegrass was introduced from east Africa as a pasture plant and is widely distributed in Australia. It prefers acidic sands and sandy-loam soils in the 400 to 700 mm annual rainfall belt.

In South Australia, African Lovegrass is mainly restricted to the sides of major highways in the mallee regions. It is present on roadsides of the Mount Lofty Ranges and particularly the Fleurieu Peninsula.

Seeds can be spread short distances by wind, and also by animals, machinery and vehicles and in hay.

Dispersal by machinery, animals and water are important in establishing new infestations.

Hygiene Practices

There are a number of hygiene practices that can help prevent the spread of African Lovegrass:

- avoid working in infested areas (except for control work)
- undertake control work prior to seed set
- do not remove seeds/plants from infested areas
- decontaminate stock prior to moving
- do not buy/sell contaminated fodder.

To prevent the spread of seed, thoroughly brush down equipment, people (boots etc.), machinery and vehicles when leaving an infested area.

Control Methods

Young African Lovegrass plants cannot compete with established, well-managed pasture.

Small infestations can be controlled by chipping or spot spraying. Soil disturbance should be minimised to avoid creating opportunities for African Lovegrass invasion.

For advice on chemical control techniques contact Landscapes Hills and Fleurieu.

Please refer to the PIRSA Weed Control Handbook for further advice on chemical control at www.pir.sa.gov.au

What to do

African Lovegrass is easily confused with native tussock-like grasses such as Poa Tussock (*Poa labillardieri*). African Lovegrass has much flatter spikelets (seed groups) than *Poa* species have.

The identity of possible infestations should be confirmed before control measures are taken.

If you suspect that you have African Lovegrass on your land, please email photos to Landscapes Hills and Fleurieu for identification.

This is a free service and they will also provide you with information on current control techniques.

Declarations

The following sections of the *Landscape SA Act* apply to African Lovegrass in the Hills and Fleurieu region:

186(2) Cannot transport the plant or anything carrying it

188(1) Cannot sell the plant

188(2) Cannot sell any produce / goods carrying the plant

192(2) Landowner must control the plant on their land

194 Regional Landscape Board may recover costs for control of weeds on roadsides from adjoining landowners



Further information

Further information is available through Landscapes Hills and Fleurieu

Mount Barker Office: Cnr Mann & Walker streets, Mount Barker, 5251 (08) 8391 7500

Email: hf.landscapeboard@sa.gov.au



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