

Purple pampas

Cortaderia jubata

Family

Poaceae (grass)

Also known as

Cutty grass, Prince-of-Wales' feathers

Where is it originally from?

South America

What does it look like?

Large, clump-forming grass (<3 m+). Very hairy leaf base with no white waxy surface. Leaves have a wide conspicuous midrib which does not continue into leaf base, and there are no secondary veins between midrib and leaf edge. Both leaf surfaces are dark green, leaves snap readily when tugged, and dead leaf bases spiral like wood shavings. Dense, erect, fluffy, bright purple flowerheads (Jan-Mar) fade to a dirty brown at the end of the flowering season.

Are there any similar species?

Cortaderia selloana and native *Austroderia* species (toetoe). Toetoe leaves don't snap readily, have distinct secondary parallel veins between midrib and edge, midrib continues into leaf base, and leaves have white waxy sheaths. Dead leaves don't spiral. Drooping light golden-yellow flowers are produced from September to January.

Why is it weedy?

Tolerates heat and frost, salt, wind, wet and drought, moderate shade, most soils, and low fertility. Recovers quickly after fire. Prolific seeder and seeds are widely dispersed.

How does it spread?

Seeds are spread long distances by wind and occasionally water. Also spreads by soil movement, dumped vegetation, contaminated forestry machinery, clothing, animal pelts. Common seed sources are plantation forests, roadsides, farm hedges, quarries and wasteland.

What damage does it do?

Colonises sprayed, burnt, slipped or otherwise disturbed sites, quickly becomes very dense. Replaces groundcovers, shrubs, and ferns, creates fire hazard, provides a habitat for possums and rats, and impedes access. Normally followed by weedy vines.

Which habitats is it likely to invade?

Forest light gaps, slips, margins, disturbed sites, open habitats, riverbeds, cliffs, inshore and offshore islands, tussockland, fernland, herbfield, duneland, coastline, gumlands, salt marsh, estuaries, and shrublands.

What can I do to get rid of it?

Establish that the species is not toetoe (look for erect seed heads in autumn)

1. Physical control: Dig or grub out seedlings or small plants. Chainsaw small plants and remove sizeable plants by bulldozer. Compost or leave on site to rot down. Burn or bury any flowerheads.
2. Spray: 520g/L haloxyfop-P-methyl (150ml/10l + crop oil) or glyphosate (100ml/10L + penetrant). Wait until the plant actively begins growing again before respraying if needed.

What can I do to stop it coming back?

Seed banks reinfest bared, burnt and sprayed site, and grazed plants resprout. Plan for increased fire risk after control. Pampas recedes as shade increases, so encourage weed replacement (planting, regeneration) as you carry out control. Follow up as needed.



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Photo: Carolyn Lewis



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