



Whatcom Weeds

Whatcom County Noxious Weed Control Board 322 N. Commercial St Bellingham WA 98225
(360) 778-6234 www.whatcomcounty.us/914/Weeds

RAVENNA GRASS

Saccharum ravennae

THREAT: Ravenna grass, also known as hardy pampas grass, is a native of the Mediterranean area. Used as an ornamental since the 1920s, it has escaped cultivation, invading areas with moist soils, such as floodplains and riparian areas. Ravenna grass requires little disturbance to become established, making it a threat to intact ecosystems. It competes with native species to form dense monocultures. Ravenna grass can also impede water flow and become a fire hazard. Ravenna grass spreads by wind dispersed seed.

Ravenna grass was listed as a Class A noxious weed in Washington State in 2015. It may be confused with Pampas and Jubata grass, both of which are also on the Washington State noxious weed list.

DESCRIPTION Ravenna grass is a large perennial grass that can grow up to 13 feet tall. It forms tussocks which can be 4 to 5 feet across. The leaves grow up to 6 feet long and are ½ to 1 inch wide. Leaves are gray-green in color, with a white mid-vein, and are weakly serrated. The top of the base of the blade is covered by dense, long, fuzzy, tan-yellow hairs. There are shorter leaves on the flowering stalk, which grow along the stalk up to the base of the flowering head. The flowers are produced in 1-2 foot silvery plumes at the ends of the stalks and plant stems may turn red when the grass is flowering. Ravenna grass can flower from late-July until the first frost. The similar Pampas and Jubata grasses have sharply serrated leaves with no hair at the bases.



MANAGEMENT OPTIONS: Ravenna grass can be controlled using mechanical control. Small infestations can be controlled by hand digging, but care must be taken to remove all the roots. Roots left in the ground will re-sprout, so follow-up visits must be made to ensure control. Material should be removed from the site to prevent any from re-rooting. If the goal is only to prevent seedfall, plumes should be cut and bagged for disposal. The grass will produce more plumes, so the plants should be checked for new flowers until the first frost of the fall. Use gloves when handling the plants to avoid contact with the serrated leaves. Although effectiveness of herbicides has not been determined for this plant, glyphosate, applied before flowering, has been used in some control situations. Contact the weed control board for more information on chemical recommendations.

Photo credits: WA State Noxious Weed Board