

Why Care About Buffelgrass?

Across southern Arizona, an invasive, non-native plant has spread aggressively, posing a fire risk that threatens plant life native to the Sonoran desert. Buffelgrass (*Pennisetum ciliare*) is a shrubby grass introduced from the African savannah that grows in dense stands and crowds out native plants.

Buffelgrass seeds spread easily by wind, animals, or on shoes or clothing. It establishes along roads; in agricultural areas, disturbed sites, empty lots; even on mountain slopes. Most native plants don't survive fire, but Buffelgrass actually benefits from it, regrowing from any remaining roots while seedlings spread to empty spaces. Eliminating Buffelgrass is vital to maintaining the unique ecosystem of the Sonoran desert.



Identification

To identify this plant, look for green or (more often) golden brown stems that grow in a large clump. The seed stalk appears like a slightly fuzzy bottlebrush, usually reddish or purplish brown. Some native grasses look similar to this plant, so it's important to correctly identify it before removal. Visit [desertmuseum.org](https://www.desertmuseum.org) for more identification tips.



Steps for Eradication

Buffelgrass grows between February and November, and during that time, there are two ways to remove it. If the plant is more than 50% green, applying an herbicide is the best method. Always follow the instructions for your chosen product.

If the plant is less than 50% green, hand pulling is best. Make sure you are wearing protective clothing, including gloves, to reduce the risk of injury. Remove as much of the roots of the plant as possible and dispose of all plant material in a heavy duty bag to avoid further seed dispersal. Mowing or trimming Buffelgrass are not effective removal methods as this plant regrows from roots that remain in the soil.

Sources:

<https://www.desertmuseum.org/buffelgrass/learn.php#biology>

