



WEEDS

KIKUYU GRASS

Glossary

Perennial

With a life span extending over more than two growing seasons.

Rhizomes

A creeping stem, usually below ground from which new aerial shoots arise.

Spikelets

Unbranched inflorescence of sessile (stalkless) flowers.

Stolons

Below ground runners.

For More Information

Contact

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Pennisetum clandestinum

Introduction

Once introduced as a lawn grass, Kikuyu Grass has now spread into wetlands and swamps in the Southwest.

It is a common weed of disturbed land areas near settlements and pastures.

This is due to its vigorous growth habit, rapidly invading gardens, paths, cultivated areas and roadside verges.

It grows in pastures where it is a valuable fodder source for cattle.

It is also often used as a soil stabiliser, which is particularly favoured by horse owners.

It is often deliberately planted to stabilise bare ground after excavation work.

Growing Habit

Able to form large colonies, due to the numerous rhizomes.

Origin

Eastern Africa.

Life form

Perennial grass

Description

Low-growing; coarse; robust grass; up to 2 m tall.

Leaves: Bright green; folded in bud; flat; 1 cm wide when mature. Spikelets are hidden among the leaves.

Flowers/Seed heads: Inconspicuous; may seem covered in spidery threads of white filaments.

Reproduction & Dispersal

Kikuyu Grass spreads from numerous rhizomes (runners) and stolons to form a thick mat of grass.

Even small fragments can take root. Does not set seed in Australia.

Distribution

Dandaragan to Albany.

Flowering Season

Summer; rarely flowers.

Effect on Ecosystem

Found encroaching on neighbouring bushland where its invasiveness tends to smother native under storey.

Control

Manual Removal

Avoid introduction into new areas, dumping garden refuse containing these grasses in and collecting manure or mulch materials from sites where it occurs.

If it becomes established, remove quickly.

Manual control is difficult as all root fragments must be removed.

Control is laborious, unless it is growing under a thick mulch, where the runners grow along the surface, and are easy to pull up.

Mowing, grazing and cultivation are usually ineffective.

It is effectively controlled with a combination of mechanical removal techniques and a herbicide treatment program.

Chemical Treatment

Easy to kill with non-selective or grass-specific herbicide, with minimal damage to the natives.

Please see 'Herbicides and Pesticides' factsheet for more information about spraying chemicals.

