

# Elephant grass

*Pennisetum purpureum*



Elephant grass is a native of Africa introduced to Australia as forage for livestock. Elephant grass is also used as an ornamental and structural landscaping plant. It has been widely planted as a windbreak and is still recommended as a highly productive tropical forage grass. Elephant grass is common in coastal areas of Queensland and is often seen growing wild on roadsides.

Elephant grass can form bamboo-like, densely tufted clumps, which become invasive in bushland vegetation. Garden plantings and the dumping of garden waste in bushland are the main sources of infestation of this invasive plant.

Unmanaged forage plantings that are not grazed also contribute to infestations.

Elephant grass is an opportunistic invasive plant with the ability to persist in disturbed areas, out-competing other native vegetation. In north Queensland, populations of elephant grass have become naturalised, and it may only be a matter of time before these infestations begin to replace native vegetation. Ornamental plantings of elephant grass should be avoided in all cases, and existing forage plantings should be managed or removed. Serious infestations can be avoided by acting now.



**Queensland**  
Government

## Legal requirements

Elephant grass is not a prohibited or restricted invasive plant under the *Biosecurity Act 2014*. However, by law, everyone has a general biosecurity obligation (GBO) to take reasonable and practical measures to minimise the biosecurity risks associated with invasive plants under their control.

Local governments must have a biosecurity plan that covers invasive plants in their area. This plan may include actions to be taken on elephant grass. Some of these actions may be required under local laws. Contact your local government for more information.

## Description

Elephant grass is a tufted perennial grass that can grow in stands up to 4 m high. It has pale green leaves up to 4 cm wide, with a strong midrib tapering to a fine point. The large flower heads range in colour from yellow to purple, and can be up to 30 cm in length. Each flower head has fine bristles along the spike. Elephant grass is similar in appearance to sugar cane but has narrower leaves and does not grow to the same height (cane will grow to 6 m).

Elephant grass can be spread by wind, moving water and seeds attached to fur, clothing and vehicles. It is also spread by humans moving plants or plant parts.

## Control

Elephant grass can be grazed or dug/dozed out.

There is no herbicide currently registered for control of elephant grass in Queensland; however, an off-label use permit (PER82307) allows the use of glyphosate at up to 2 L (360 g/L formulation)/100 L water for the control of invasive plants in non-agricultural areas, bushland and forests as listed in Table 1. Permit PER11463 allows for the use of imazapyr and imazapyr + glyphosate at the rates listed in Table 1. Control will be more effective if applied to regrowth after slashing. Follow-up treatment may be required.

Imazapyr is mobile in soil and is readily taken up via roots. Do not use products containing imazapyr near desirable plants or where their roots may extend.

Prior to using the herbicides listed under either permit, you must read or have read to you and understand the conditions of the permit. To obtain a copy of a permit visit [apvma.gov.au](http://apvma.gov.au).

## More information

More information is available from your local government office or visit [biosecurity.qld.gov.au](http://biosecurity.qld.gov.au).

**Table 1. Herbicides for the control of elephant grass**

Situation	Herbicide	Rate	Registration details	Comments
<b>Forests</b> Native vegetation areas, bushland reserves, revegetation areas and national park areas <b>Non cropland</b> Rights-of-way, open spaces, commercial and industrial areas, domestic and urban areas, public service areas and botanic gardens	Glyphosate 360 g/L (e.g. Weedmaster Duo)	1.5 L/100L water	APVMA permit PER82307 (expires 31/08/2027)	Spot spray
Non-agricultural areas, domestic and public service areas, commercial and industrial areas, bushland/native forests, roadsides, rights-of-way, vacant lots, wastelands, wetlands, dunal and coastal areas	Imazapyr 250 g/L (e.g. Arsenal Herbicide)	4–6 mL/1 L water plus wetting agent or 4–6 L/ha	APVMA permit PER11463 (expires 30/04/2027)	Spot spray Imazapyr is readily taken up via roots and may harm nearby plants. Do not apply near desirable plants, or where roots of desirable plants may extend.
	Imazapyr 150 g/L + glyphosate 150 g/L (e.g. Arsenal Express)	105–150 mL/15 L water or 7–10 L/ha		Medium to high volume spray as per label instructions. Imazapyr is readily taken up via roots and may harm nearby plants. Do not apply near desirable plants or where roots of desirable plants may extend.

### Read the label carefully before use. Always use the herbicide in accordance with the directions on the label.

Fact sheets are available from [biosecurity.qld.gov.au](http://biosecurity.qld.gov.au). The control methods recommended should be used in accordance with the restrictions (federal and state legislation, and local government laws) directly or indirectly related to each control method. These restrictions may prevent the use of one or more of the methods referred to, depending on individual circumstances. While every care is taken to ensure the accuracy of this information, the department does not invite reliance upon it, nor accept responsibility for any loss or damage caused by actions based on it.

