

BUFFEL BUSTING at home



What is buffel grass?

Buffel grass (*Cenchrus ciliaris* and *C. pennisetiformis*) is a tussock grass from Africa, India, and Asia. It was deliberately introduced to Central Australia and has since spread uncontrollably, outcompeting native plants, reducing biodiversity, damaging cultural sites, and increasing fire risk. Buffel grass is a declared weed under the *Weeds Management Act 2001* due to its severe environmental impact.



What's the problem with buffel?

! It Outcompetes Native Plants

- Grows aggressively after rain and survives drought, grazing, and fire.
- Spreads easily via long-lasting seeds.
- Alters landscapes to favour its own growth

! It Threatens Cultural Land and Foodways

- Displaces bushfoods, covers hunting tracks, and hides snakes.
- Invades water sources, restricting access to culturally significant sites.

! It Increases Fire Risk

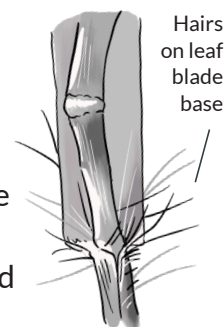
- Creates dense, flammable fuel, leading to hotter, more intense fires.
- Recovers quickly after burning, fuelling further fires.
- Many native plants, including trees, can't survive the increased fire frequency and intensity, leading to habitat loss and reduced food sources for wildlife.

Buffel grass identification

Deep-rooted grass up to 1m high, forming dense tussocks. Varies in appearance depending on time of year; straw-coloured when dry.

Leaves

- Bluish-green leaves which are hairy, flat or folded and with pointed tips.
- A ring of short hairs at the base of leaf blades
- Leaves can grow 30cm long and to 1.3cm wide.



Seeds

- Seeds enclosed in a cluster of bristles, which gives them a 'fluffy' appearance
- Seed heads in a dense, hairy, cylindrical spike up to 15cm long and 2cm wide
- Seed heads with a purple appearance which fades to white as they age
- A 'zig-zag' shaped, rough textured axis which becomes visible once the seeds drop.



CONTROL METHODS



Prevention is key! Prevention is the most successful and cost-effective way of managing unwanted plants.

Prevention Tips

- Prioritise eradication of isolated plants.
- Control minor infestations, isolated outbreaks or seedlings first.
- Suppress seed production through chemical control, slashing and, in some situations, grazing.
- Monitor areas that you have already treated - watch for re-infestations.
- Work strategically - either work outward from buffel-free zone and increase the size of the area; or contain major infestations by working from the edges inward.
- Try to disturb the soil little as possible.
- Start by setting a good example by removing invasive grasses from your yard. Then encourage your neighbours and friends to do the same.

Manual Removal

Manual Removal is labour-intensive but effective for small areas like yards and driveways. It works best for isolated weeds and new outbreaks before they release seeds.

Removal Steps:

- With gloves on, gather the grass clump.
- Use a digging bar or mattock around the base to loosen the soil.
- When the roots start to give, pull firmly.
- Remove the entire root ball.
- Bag and dispose—**do not home compost**, the seeds can survive composting. You can use the grass as mulch or a base for raised beds if you are careful to avoid seeds and keep on top of any regrowth.

Chemical Control

No authorisation is required to apply Bioweed, Glyphosate, or Flupropanate on private land (e.g., yards, driveways). Always follow label instructions carefully. If you are unsure, contact Weed Management Branch: **(08) 8951 9210**

Buffel grass can be cut before applying herbicide.

Bioweed: An organically certified, pine-oil-based herbicide that effectively kills buffel grass seeds. Selective to weeds.

Glyphosate: A fast-acting, non-selective herbicide. Care must be taken as it is potent and will kill most plants. Best applied to green, actively growing buffel after summer rains. Kills treated plants in 1–4 weeks.

Flupropanate: A slow-acting, semi-selective herbicide that may affect some native species. Can be applied year-round, but best 2–3 months before rain. Takes 2–12 months or longer to kill buffel.

Important!



Watch out for snakes! Poke the buffel grass plant before you begin any work.



Do not slash or mow—the roots must be fully removed, or it will grow back.



Soil disturbance promotes regrowth, so follow-up, ongoing control is needed.

Get involved!

Good news! There is already a hard-working community of buffel busters doing incredible work.

Alice Springs Landcare runs monthly field days from autumn to spring: alicespringslandcare.com

Olive Pink Botanic Garden runs field days every second Saturday: opbg.com.au

