



# Cogongrass *Imperata cylindrica* (L.) Palisot

**Common Names:** cogongrass, blady grass, santintail, alang-alang, kunai, paillotte

**Native Origin:** Southeast Asia, Philippines, China, and Japan; first introduced to the US as packing material in shipping crates then as forage grass and for soil erosion control

**Description:** Cogongrass is a perennial, rhizomatous plant in the grass family (Poaceae) that grows approximately 2 to 4 or more feet in height. The leaves are about an inch wide, have a prominent white midrib, and end in a sharp point. Leaf margins are finely toothed and are embedded with silica crystals. The lower surface of the leaf blade is often hairy near the base; the upper is hairless. The white plume-like flowers are arranged in a silvery, cylindrical, branching structure, or panicle, about 3 to 11 inches long and 1½ inches wide. Cogon grass reproduces both vegetatively and from seed. In spring, a single plant can produce up to 3000 seeds per seed head that may be carried great distances by the wind. Vegetative spread of cogon grass is aided by its tough and massive rhizomes that may remain dormant for extended periods of time before sprouting. Rhizomes can grow from 1.5 to 3 meters per year.



**Habitat:** Cogongrass is a hardy species, tolerant of shade, high salinity, moisture and drought. It grows in coastland, disturbed areas, natural forest, planted forests, range/grasslands, riparian zones, scrub/shrub lands, urban areas, and wetlands.

**Distribution:** This species is reported from states shaded on Plants Database map. It has also been reported in Virginia, West Virginia and Maryland, and is on the noxious weed lists for Minnesota and Vermont.



**Ecological Impacts:** Cogongrass is considered one of the 10 worst weeds worldwide and a pest in 73 countries. It can invade and overtake disturbed ecosystems, forming a dense mat of thatch and leaves that make it difficult for other plants to coexist. Large infestations of cogon grass can alter the normal fire regime of a fire-driven ecosystem by causing more frequent and intense fires that injure or destroy native plants. Cogongrass displaces a variety of native plant species used by native animals (e.g., insects, mammals, and birds) as forage, host plants and shelter. Some ground-nesting species have been known to be displaced by the dense cover that cogon grass creates.

### Control and Management:

- **Manual-** Multiple cultivations will eradicate cogongrass, however mowing and burning stimulates the growth and spread
- **Chemical-** It can be effectively controlled using any of several readily available general use herbicides such as glyphosate in September or October with multiple applications to re-growth. Repeat before flowering in spring to suppress seed production and again in following years for eradication. Revegetation may be necessary following herbicide treatment, to prevent soil erosion and to help reduce reinfestation by cogon grass. It is crucial that applications be made in early fall. Follow label and state requirements for herbicide applications.

### References:

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