

## WEED FILE: PAMPAS

REVISED: APRIL 2016



Pampas Grass – *Cortaderia selloana*

Purple Pampas Grass – *Cortaderia jubata*

### DESCRIPTION

*Note: The two introduced pampas grass pest species (above) are often confused with the native plant toetoe, also Cortaderia species, of which there are four varieties. An identification guide appears below.*

Pampas grass is banned nationally from being sold, propagated or distributed. It's an invasive plant that forms dense stands of up to 5 metres high (pampas grass) or 3 metres (purple pampas). Both species spread readily and smother other desirable vegetation. It is also a fire risk when dry in summer, and harbours rodent pests.

The plant is actually a perennial giant grass species, and forms thick tussock-like clumps. The leaves are long and slender and grow from the base. They are up to 2 metres long and 30-35mm wide, and have serrated cutting edges in both the pampas species. Rising above these are the flowers, appearing on long stalks as feathery flags that extend the height of the flowering plant considerably.

Pampas grass flowers from March to May, and the flower heads are generally white, sometimes pinkish or light purple,

Purple pampas flowers earlier; generally January to March. The flower heads are purple and fade to dull brown as they mature and produce particularly large amounts of seed.

In addition to the fire and vermin hazards that pampas stands represent, and their invasive effect on natural habitats, the seeds of the pampas are a serious problem if kiwifruit is grown nearby, sticking to the furry fruit skin and reducing its value considerably.

The roots of both pampas species are fibrous and dense, extending to 3 metres or more. This makes control by grubbing out very difficult in established stands.

### DISTINGUISHING PAMPAS FROM TOETOE

The best recognition features allowing you to distinguish between introduced pampas species and native toetoe species are:

- Toetoe generally flowers earlier; October to January.
- Toetoe has distinctive fine veins appearing on the leaves between the mid-rib and the margin of the leaf, while pampas does not.
- Pampas has distinctly curled woody shavings (leaf litter) at the base, while toetoe does not.
- Pampas leaves are easily snapped off cross-ways, while the toetoe leaf is difficult to break or tear.

### HABITAT

Having been introduced originally as a fast growing shelter belt plant, pampas grasses have now spread throughout NZ where they invade open areas of pasture land, and in particular bush margins, burned and waste areas and firebreaks, and once established they spread quickly. Native turfland is also highly vulnerable to pampas invasion.

### NON-CHEMICAL CONTROL

Smaller and isolated plants can be grubbed or pulled out by hand (wear gloves!) Grazing is not a viable control method because stock will prefer more palatable alternatives (including toetoe).

Chainsawing, slashing and even bulldozing can be effective, although there will be regrowth that will have to be sprayed for control anyway.

### HERBICIDE CONTROL

Because it is actually a giant grass species, the grass-friendly herbicides (GrassMate, Triclo, etc) are ineffective. The answer is to use a herbicide optimised for killing grasses, the obvious choice among which is of course Glyphosate, which is effective, safe to use, inexpensive and almost always available on hand.

Spraying can be effectively done from spring to autumn, or following flowering.

Because pampas will often be growing close to valuable species that would also be affected by glyphosate's non-selective action, it is wise to shield those plants with plastic or cardboard to avoid unwanted collateral damage.

In very dense stands it may be necessary to cut the foliage back before spraying, to obtain adequate penetration into the plant, but this does reduce the total leaf area and often means that follow-up spraying of regrowth will be necessary.

### Spraying

- **Glyphosate** at 100ml per 10L water (or **Granny** at 45g per 100L), plus 20ml of **SprayWetter** or **SuperWetter** penetrant.

Spray late spring to autumn for best results.

### Weed Wiping

Effective wiping may be possible if plant height allows (or if taller plants have been slashed down first). This will avoid unwanted damage to other plants in the treatment area, assuming they are shorter than the pampas.

- **Glyphosate** at 200ml/L of water (or **Granny** at 90g/L), plus 2ml of either **SprayWetter** or **SuperWetter**.

