

African lovegrass (*Eragrostis curvula*)

Fact sheet

What do they look like?

African lovegrass is a perennial tussock grass 30 to 120cm high. The root system is shallow and fibrous. Leaves are dark green to blue green and rough to touch, while the sheath at the base of each leaf is smooth and there is a ring of hairs at the opening of the sheath. The flowering stems are slender and arching, ending in loose, finely branched panicles 10-30cm long. The panicle branches are very slender and drooping, bearing separate grey-green spikelets 4-10mm long. The spikelets break up to release 4-13 ripe seeds, which are about 1mm long and cream to brown in colour when ripe. African lovegrass is most abundant on open grasslands on light sandy soils.

Seeds germinate in autumn or spring as long as moisture levels and temperatures are suitable.



Seedlings grow slowly in the early stages but growth accelerates after the five-leaf stage. Plants cease growth during winter but are frost hardy;

they reshoot when temperatures rise in spring. Flowering begins in December and ripe seeds are present from January to March. New stems and flowers may be produced all year round, as long as water is available, in warmer areas. African lovegrass reproduces only by seed. This is normally produced without cross pollination, so there is little variation within a population of African lovegrass.

Why should African lovegrass be controlled?

African lovegrass was introduced from southern Africa as a pasture plant. It competes very effectively with other grasses, annuals and perennials, and can form dense pure stands excluding other species. Because of its high seed production, high germination rate and the difficulty of controlling it by herbicides or management practices, it is important to keep African lovegrass off clean properties or to recognise and destroy new infestations before they become established.



It is very invasive in pasture due to its high reproductive rate and low palatability for stock when mature. Its rapid rate of spread during summer and dense tussock form result in sparse pastures being overtaken by this weedy grass. Seed is spread by contaminated produce, soil and

machinery, and over shorter distance by wind and water. As a weed it is found in disturbed soils along roadsides, railway tracks, riverbanks and waste places, from which it invades adjacent degraded pastures.

What are my responsibilities?

African lovegrass is a declared weed under the *Landscape South Australia Act 2019*. This means it is illegal to transport or sell this plant and all property owners have a responsibility to control African lovegrass on their property. Residents who rent their properties also have obligations to control any weeds present. This also includes anyone who is leasing property unless other arrangements have been made.

What are the best ways to control African lovegrass?

Control of African lovegrass is not easy and requires an integrated approach to be effective. The best option is to prevent establishment in the first place. In clean areas, be vigilant and control any small infestations.



Mechanical control

Seedlings, small plants and small infestations can be grubbed with a mattock making sure all roots are removed. Monitor the site and then spray any fresh re-growth. Burn the grubbed plant if possible, or bag the seed heads and place them in your red bin for deep burial at the dump.

Chemical control

Large infestations are best controlled with herbicide between January and March. Plants must be actively growing (green) when herbicide is applied. If a large build-up of dead (brown) plant matter is present, slashing or burning of plants to encourage fresh green growth before spraying is advisable. Foliage should be thoroughly sprayed to runoff and care taken not to miss any part of the plant (applying a dye can help). Spray the plant with the following herbicide mix: In 10 litres of water mix 26ml of glyphosate, 30ml of flupropanate and 500ml of Bioweed Organic.

Bioweed is made from pine oil and suppresses seeds on the weed and ground. When it comes in to contact with the seed, it dries out the epidermis or coating. This leads to the seed cracking prematurely and drying out the embryo. Slashing to promote fresh growth 2-3 weeks before spraying will increase effectiveness.

When using herbicides always ensure that you follow the label directions.

Do you have African lovegrass?

If you think you have African lovegrass on your property, Eyre Peninsula Landscape Board staff can provide advice on control and management.

More information

Email: ep.landscapeboard@sa.gov.au

Phone: 08 8688 3200

www.landscape.sa.gov.au/ep