

## AFRICAN LOVEGRASS

(*Eragrostis curvula*)



Jackie Miles/Max Campbell

Weed: African lovegrass



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### *Why is African lovegrass a weed?*

- Outcompetes native vegetation, especially in grasslands, and grows to dominate pasture, removing habitat for native species and decreasing carrying capacity
- It thrives on low nutrient soils, road and rail reserves and over-grazed pasture as well as invading forest along tracks
- For most of the year it's avoided by livestock and replaces more palatable species in grazed pasture
- It's highly flammable and creates a fire hazard
- It spreads widely after periods of drought have left paddocks bare
- Once established African lovegrass not only reduces the capacity of the land to be productive, it is also costly to control

### *Description*

**Plant:** a large perennial tussock grass to 1 m with narrow, flat, pale grey-green to blue-green leaves

**Leaves:** leaf blades are hairless and have distinct parallel veins. The form most common on the Monaro has curly leaf tips which are a highly useful identification feature even outside of flowering periods. There is a ring of long hairs where the leaf joins the leaf sheath

**Seeds:** the most distinctive feature common to all forms of African lovegrass is the black or dark grey colour of the young seed heads. These start with the branches folded close to the main stem but open out as they age

### *Dispersal via*

- Slashing plants when they are carrying seed results in seed dispersal on vehicles/machinery (a common method of spread for grass weeds)
- In soil on vehicles and machinery
- Water along river systems
- In the gut of livestock, then dispersed in droppings
- In contaminated hay

### *Status*

African lovegrass is listed as a class 4 noxious weed in all council areas within the Molonglo Catchment. The growth and spread of the plant must be controlled in accordance with local management plans published by each local council. In the ACT, African lovegrass is a class 3 Pest Plant which must be contained.



Fact sheets are available from the Molonglo Catchment Group website. Visit [www.molonglocatchment.com.au](http://www.molonglocatchment.com.au) or call 6128 3376 for more information about getting involved in your living environment.

Information used to compile this fact sheet was kindly provided by the Southern Tablelands and South Coast Noxious Plants Committee: [www.southeastweeds.org.au](http://www.southeastweeds.org.au)

### Look-alikes

Native plants can often be confused with weed species. The following information aims to assist you with accurate identification to prevent the loss of our declining natives. If you are unsure what species you are dealing with, take advantage of the identification services on offer from your local weeds officer (either at your local council or the ACT's Parks, Conservation and Lands) before carrying out any controls.

The most similar grasses to the robust tussock form of African lovegrass are **'river' or 'silver' tussock** (*Poa labillardieri*), the broader leaved *Poa ensiformis* and **'snowgrass' or poa 'tussock'** (*Poa sieberiana*), which all differ in having the young seed heads purple tinged.

Jackie Miles/Max Campbell



Native: 'river' or 'silver' tussock

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Native: river tussock

The weedy **Parramatta grass** (*Sporobolus africanus*) looks similar to the open, low-growing form. It has similar blue-green, hairless glossy leaves, a spreading growth habit, and the seed heads are black or grey in colour. However, they are a narrow spike, without spreading branches.

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Weed: Parramatta grass

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Weed: Parramatta grass

There are many native lovegrasses, some of which look a little similar. One such species is *Eragrostis parviflora*. It has long nodding seed heads that are more delicate but are also black or leaden grey in colour. It is usually a smaller plant. **Paddock lovegrass** (*Eragrostis leptostachya*) is a very common pasture plant that has a similar low-growing habit, with blue-green leaves, but the seed heads have short branches which stand out at right angles or even point backwards slightly from the main stem.

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Native: paddock lovegrass

### Control methods

For advice on what time of year to implement the following management options, see the Molonglo Catchment Weed Control Calendar. Seek advice on chemical application from your Council Weeds Officer or local 'bush friendly' nursery. Always use chemicals as directed on the label.

Dig out and destroy seed heads, or spot spray. Plant sets seed from October to May. Once a dense infestation has developed, cultivation and establishment of a vigorous perennial pasture, via direct seeding, may be needed. Do not graze in the first year, and remove any African lovegrass seedlings that appear. Manage grazing intensity to maintain pasture vigour to out-compete lovegrass seedlings.

Due to the persistent nature of this weed it is advised that you contact your local weeds officer for detailed control advice.