

PLANT: Cogongrass (*Imperata cylindrica*) is an aggressive colony-forming perennial grass native to Southeast Asia that often forms circular infestations. It is also known as japgrass, Red Barron (red variety) and Japanese blood grass (red variety).

IDENTIFICATION: Grass is 1 to 6 ft tall, often leaning into mats when over 3 ft tall and arising from branching sharp, white-scaly rhizomes. Tufts of long leaves are usually yellow-green, with blades that have an off-centered, white midvein. Silvery-plumed flowers are tightly branched on the terminal end of a reddish slender stalk. Flowers bloom in Alabama from February to May. Seeds tiny, brown, oblong, and grain-like are obscured in dense tufts of silky, silvery-white hairy husks. Seeds appear from May to June and are released by wind dispersal. Cogongrass resembles several other grass species growing in Alabama.

ECOLOGY: It grows in full sunlight to partial shade, and can aggressively invade a range of sites: rights-of-way, new forest plantations, open forests, old fields, and pastures. It colonizes by rhizomes and spreads by wind-dispersed seeds. Rapidly growing and branching rhizomes form a dense mat enabling it to exclude the growth and regeneration of most other vegetation. Cogongrass burns extremely hot, especially in winter if promoted by a wildfire or a prescribed burn. Cogongrass is absent in areas with frequent tillage.

HERBICIDE CONTROL: For mature older growth infestations, apply a 42+% active ingredient of imazapyr herbicide (Arsenal AC, Vanquish, or Polaris AC) as a 1% solution (4 ounces per 3-gallon mix) in water with a surfactant (methylated seed oil, vegetable oil, or basal oil) at a 1% solution to thoroughly wet all leaves. Apply herbicide from June to September. If safety to surrounding vegetation is desired, apply a 41% active ingredient of glyphosate herbicide (Accord, Razor, or Roundup Original) as a 2% to 5% solution (8 to 20 ounces per 3-gallon mix) in water with a surfactant at a 1% solution. Two herbicide treatments should be applied per growing season anytime from March to October (just before flowering in the spring and again in late summer). Apply a glyphosate herbicide (2% to 5% solution) with an imazapyr herbicide (1% solution) in water with a surfactant (1% solution) for better effectiveness on growing shoots. Treat the cogongrass and any re-sprouts until rhizomes are dead for successive years to eradicate infestation.

WARNING: Herbicides containing the active ingredient imazapyr can damage plants with roots in the treated area. Always read and follow label instructions carefully.



Source: (A Field Guide for the Identification of, A Management Guide for) Invasive Plants in Southern Forests, James H. Miller, USDA Forest Service, 2010. Photo Credit: G. Keith Douce, The University of Georgia, www.forestryimages.org



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