weed watch™

YOUR ALERT TO NEW AND EMERGING THREATS.

1. *Large plants persisting in an abandoned garden.* ***2.*** *Dense clump of bamboo-like stems.* ***3.*** *Large and relatively broad leaves.* ***4.*** *Young seed-head.*

GRASS

Tiger grass (*Thysanolaena latifolia*)

Introduced | Not Declared

Tiger grass is a long-lived clumping grass that is becoming common in cultivation as an ornamental garden plant. This species is native to the Indian Sub-continent, China, Japan and south-eastern Asia. However, it is starting to spread from cultivation in Queensland and is now thought to be a potential environmental weed.

Distribution

This species has recently been reported growing away from cultivation in south-eastern and northern Queensland. A single plant was noticed growing on the edge of a waterway in Moorooka in the southern suburbs of Brisbane in 2009. More recently, in July 2011, a larger population of numerous large clumping plants was found scattered along the steep banks of a waterway in the southern suburbs of Cairns.

Description

Tiger grass is a long-lived plant that usually grows 2-3 m tall and eventually forms a large and dense clump. It produces numerous upright or arching stems (up to 10 mm thick) that are unbranched and have joints at regular intervals. These stems are bamboo-like in appearance and bear large alternatively arranged leaves. The leaves consist of a sheath at the base, which encloses the stem, and a spreading leaf blade. The very large leaf blades are relatively broad (25-60 cm long and 3-7 cm wide) with pointed tips and entire margins.

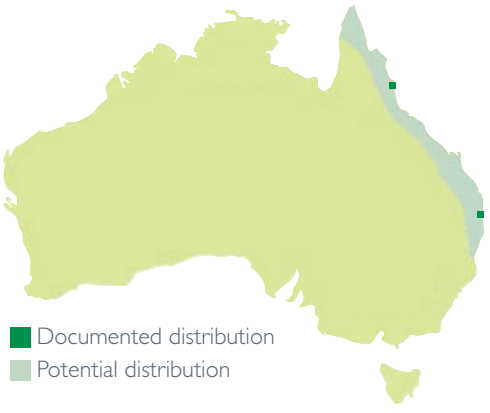
The large seed-heads (30-60 cm long) are usually open in appearance with numerous very slender spreading branches. These branches can be up to 30 cm long and each bears numerous tiny flower spikelets (1.5-2 mm long). The flower spikelets at first appear hairless, but as they mature the small hairs become more obvious, giving the seed-head a slightly feathery appearance. Each flower spikelet contains a single tiny seed about 0.5 mm long.

Quick Facts

- A large, clumping, grass usually growing about 2-3 m tall
- Its upright stems are obviously jointed and resemble a slender bamboo plant.
- The large alternating leaves are relatively broad with pointed tips
- The stems are topped with large open seed-heads in summer.

Habitat

This species has so far been recorded growing in riparian vegetation in tropical and sub-tropical regions. It has also been noticed persisting in old gardens and may have the potential to also invade rainforest gaps and margins and wetter disturbed sites in urban bushland.



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1. *Young plant growing along a creek in Moorooka.* **2.** *Habit in flower along a creek in Cairns.*

Reproduction and Dispersal

When mature, the numerous tiny flowering spikelets are shed from the seed-heads. Each of these flower spikelets contains a small seed, and is covered with numerous hairs. Because of their small and feathery nature, they are easily spread about by the wind. They may also be dispersed by water, vehicles, mowing equipment and in contaminated soil.

Why is it an Emerging Threat?

Tiger grass is a potential threat to riparian vegetation and other damp or shady sites in tropical and sub-tropical regions. It is yet to appear in dense stands or cause serious problems, but has only been common in cultivation in recent years. Its large tufted growth habit and quick growth rate suggests it has the capacity to out compete native species in the ground layer.

Control Methods

Some thought should be taken as to whether plants being cultivated near environmentally sensitive areas should be removed. Isolated Tiger Grass plants growing in natural vegetation may be removed manually, ideally prior to seeding, but care should be taken to remove all of the tussock while at the same time minimising any soil disturbance. Any mature seed-heads should be collected, bagged and disposed of in a sanitary manner to prevent the spread of seed.

No chemicals are currently specifically registered for the control of Tiger Grass in Australia. However, within Queensland, the control of invasive grasses in non-crop areas is permitted under the conditions outlined in APVMA off-label permit 11463 (http://permits.apvma.gov.au/PER11463.PDF). This temporary permit allows for the spot spraying of grass weeds in bushland areas with certain herbicides (e.g. glyphosate, fluazifop and haloxyfop). However, if the weed is growing near a waterway then only products registered for use in aquatic situations should be used (e.g. Round-up Biactive or Weedmaster Duo). Always read and follow the conditions on this permit carefully before employing this method and, unless otherwise stated in this permit, the use of the product must be in accordance with the instructions on its label.

Within other state boundaries, it is recommended that all managers consult any relevant permits or government legislation applicable to their region.

Look a-likes

This plant is quite distinctive, but may sometimes be confused with some of the smaller ornamental bamboo species. However, true bamboo species rarely flower and have much larger flower spikelets. Palm grass (*Setaria palmifolia*) is another large clumping grass, but its leaves are obviously pleated.

Top. *Habit of palm grass*
Bottom. *Close-up of pleated leaf blade.*

This information has been developed with the assistance of Dr Sheldon Navie. Photographs are also courtesy of Dr Sheldon Navie © *Technigro Australia Pty Ltd 2011*

Your Provider of Vegetation Management Solutions
Post: PO Box 2020, Nerang BC, QLD, 4210
T: 1800 678 611 technigro.com.au

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