

1. Infestation in a swamp in Deagon, Brisbane. 2. Hairless stem and leaf blade. 3. Open seed-head with spreading branches. 4. Close-up of flower spikelets.



Bahia Lovegrass (*Eragrostis bahiensis*)

Introduced

Not Declared

Bahia Lovegrass is a long-lived clumping grass that is native to large parts of South America. It has become naturalised in several other regions of the world including south-eastern USA, Mexico, Europe and Australia.

Distribution

Bahia Lovegrass was first recorded in Australia as a weed in the Sunshine Coast region in the 1960's, with the earliest records coming from the Landsborough and Coolumb areas. It remained restricted to the Sunshine Coast area until a record from Rockhampton in the early 1980's.

This species has continued to spread in the intervening years, and in recent times its frequency and rate of spread throughout Queensland appears to have increased quite substantially. Populations have been reported from Cape York Peninsula, the Mackay region, Gympie, Hervey Bay, Logan City, Moreton Island, St. George and Injune. It is also now quite widespread throughout the Brisbane area, with sightings reported in several suburbs including Deagon, Mackenzie, Stretton, Drewvale and Heathwood.

Description

A tufted grass with upright or semi-upright stems usually growing 30-90 cm tall, but occasionally reaching 1.2 m in height. Its stems are hairless with slightly swollen joints, and they are often purplish-tinged at the base of the plant. The alternately arranged leaves consist of a sheath at the base, which encloses the stem, and a spreading leaf blade. The hairless leaf blades are long and narrow in shape (5-40 cm long and 1-5 mm wide) with entire margins and pointed tips.

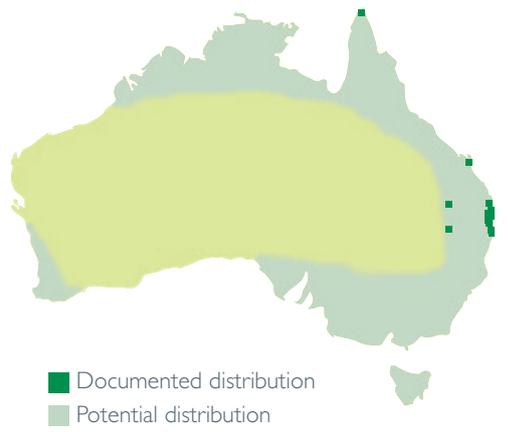
The open and branched seed-heads are borne at the tops of the stems and vary from 5 to 30 cm in size. The main branches of the seed-heads are 3-12 cm long, but they are usually further divided into many smaller spreading branches (i.e. they form a loose panicle). The numerous tiny flower spikelets are borne on very slender stalks. They are elongated in shape (6-10 mm long and about 2 mm wide) and produce between 10 and 20 seeds. When mature, the seeds are shed from the flower spikelet individually, but the delicate central stalk remains in place.

Quick Facts

- > A long-lived clumping grass usually growing in wetter sites.
- > Upright or semi-upright stems (30-120 cm tall) with hairless joints.
- > Open seed-heads with many branches and numerous small flower spikelets.
- > Each flower spikelet produces 10-20 seeds.

Habitat

Bahia Lovegrass usually grows on sandy soils and is most often seen growing in low-lying or wet sites. It has been recorded from various habitats including roadsides, forest tracks, swamp margins, drainage lines, ditches, paperbark forests, industrial areas, pasture trials and disturbed sites.





1. Tufted habit of large plant. 2. Old flower spikelets look like a "fishbone" after the seeds are shed.

Reproduction and Dispersal

This species seeds prolifically in spring and summer, with flowering having been reported between October and April in Brisbane. Along roadsides, tracks and other linear infrastructure (e.g. powerlines, pipelines, etc.), the seeds may be spread by vehicles and other equipment undertaking maintenance or construction activities (e.g. mowing, slashing, grading, etc.). Seeds may also be dispersed into waterways and down catchments following significant rainfall events.

Why is it an Emerging Threat?

Bahia Lovegrass seems to be appearing in larger numbers each year, often in association with other invasive grasses such as African lovegrass (*Eragrostis curvula*) and the weedy *Sporobolus* grasses. Like these species, Bahia Lovegrass has the potential to become a serious nuisance for managers of linear assets. It is also often associated with wetter habitats, such as drainage lines and swampy sites. Hence, it may also compete with and replace native species in certain habitats (e.g. paperbark swamps and wallum flats).

Control Methods

Isolated Bahia Lovegrass plants growing in natural vegetation may be removed manually, ideally prior to seeding, 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 Bahia Lovegrass 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/PERI1463.PDF>). This temporary permit allows for the spot spraying of grass weeds with certain herbicides (e.g. glyphosate, fluazifop and haloxyfop). However, if the weed is growing near water (as Bahia Lovegrass often does) 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 the off-label permit, the use of the product must be in accordance with the instructions on its label.

Look a-likes

Bahia Lovegrass can be easily confused with several other native and introduced Lovegrasses, including Brown's Lovegrass (*Eragrostis brownii*) and African Lovegrass (*Eragrostis curvula*). However, unlike these other species, the central stalk of the flower spikelet remains in place when the mature seeds of Bahia Lovegrass are shed.



Top. Brown's Lovegrass seed-head with fewer and shorter branches.

Bottom. Spreading habit of Brown's Lovegrass.

The control methods referred to in Weed Watch™ should be used in accordance with the restrictions (federal and state legislation and local government laws) directly or indirectly related to each control method. These restrictions may prevent the utilisation of one or more of the methods referred to, depending on individual circumstances. While every care is taken to ensure the accuracy of this information, Technigro does not invite reliance upon it, nor accept responsibility for any loss or damage caused by actions based on it.

This information has been developed with the assistance of Dr Sheldon Navie. Photographs are also courtesy of Dr Sheldon Navie © Technigro Australia Pty Ltd 2013