

## FC Noxious Weed Control Best Management Practices



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## Ravenna Grass

*Saccharum ravennae*

Family: Poaceae

Class B-Designate Noxious Weed  
Control Required

## Background Information

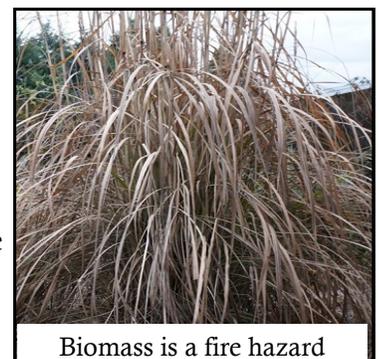
**Ravenna grass** is of the Poaceae (Grass) family. It originated in North Africa, Asia and Europe. Ravenna grass has been in the horticultural trade since at least 1921, prized by gardeners for its dramatic display sustained throughout all four seasons. Ravenna grass is also referred to as plume grass or hardy pampus grass, although it is unrelated to pampus grass. This tall perennial bunchgrass has escaped from ornamental plantings and has been found along the Columbia river, in seasonal wet areas, waste ways, and along ditches and roads in Franklin County. Ravenna grass thrives in moist or dry, gravelly environments. It is cold hardy and withstands regular freezes. Ravenna grass has long cane-like stalks that can reach heights of 6-12 feet with a basal area several feet in diameter. Stalks often turn red in mid-summer prior to formation of plumes that appear late summer through fall. Another distinguishing characteristic is the thick, white mid-vein on the upper side of the basal leaves. Ravenna grass plants support multiple seed heads which produce thousands of seeds. The seeds are light weight dispersed by wind and water.



Ravenna grass reaches heights of 6-12 feet

## Impacts

**Ravenna grass** successfully germinates in a wide range of habitats. In high moisture areas basal leaves crowd out native and desirable species, creating habitat for rodents and acting as a physical barrier to water flow. Established stands produce large amounts of biomass increasing chances for fire. The large fibrous root system of Ravenna grass will lift concrete. Many reports of unwanted volunteer plants germinating in lawns are received by our staff.



Biomass is a fire hazard

## Key Identifying Traits



White mid-vein on top side of leaf

- ◆ The leaf has a prominent white vein running the length.
- ◆ Stems are tall cane-like structures that often turn red when getting ready to flower.
- ◆ Flower heads are pale, silvery to purple feathery plumes produced in late summer.



Flowering stems turn red prior to plume development

## Biology and Ecology

- ◆ Perennial bunchgrass with large basal clumping leaves surrounding bamboo-like canes which may exceed 10-12 feet in height.
- ◆ Grows in moist or dry soils.
- ◆ Fibrous branching root system anchors plants in soil.
- ◆ Plants produce thousands of seed dispersed by wind.



Feathery plumes appear late summer through fall

## Control Measures

**Prevention:** Ravenna grass is under consideration for placement on Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) quarantine list. In the near future it will no longer be allowed into the state of Washington. Gardeners should consider alternative, non-invasive ornamental grasses in its place.

**Biological:** None

**Cultural:** Preventing the establishment of populations through best management practices is the most cost effective method of control.

**Mechanical:** Ravenna grass plants generally have a shallow root system and can be dug out of the ground. Removal of the entire root ball is necessary to keep plants from re-growing. Cutting and bagging seed heads is a short term fix until the entire plant can be removed. This is labor intensive as new plumes will develop within the same growing season several times over the season.

**Chemical:** Foliar spot application of non-selective herbicides has been successful. Glyphosate at a 5 % solution and Imazapyr at a 1% solution have been effective in controlling Ravenna grass. Fall applications work best on larger plants as they begin to move reserves down to the root system. Add a surfactant to penetrate the leaf surface. A follow-up application may be necessary. Survey the area often!

**ALWAYS FOLLOW LABEL INSTRUCTIONS, THE LABEL IS THE LAW**

For this and other publications, see our website at: [fcweedboard.com](http://fcweedboard.com)

Photos: FCWB staff and WA State Noxious Weed Control Board