



### **Fountain grass (*Pennisetum setaceum*)**

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- Scientific name & Code:** *Pennisetum setaceum* (Forssk.) Chiov., **PESE3**  
Synonyms – *Pennisetum ruppelii* Steud., *Phalaris setacea* Forssk.
- Family:** Poaceae – Grass Family
- Duration/Growth Habit:** Perennial Graminoid
- Common names:** English – crimson fountain grass, African fountain grass, fountain grass
- Origin:** Northern Africa
- Description:** Sparsely branching, tufted perennial grass 0.2-1 m high with feathery (bristly) spike-like inflorescences, the bristles long and detaching with the spikelets. Leaves up to 40 mm long x 3 mm wide, stiff and rough. Leaf sheaths to 15 cm, hairy at throat. Ligules a dense row of hairs. Inflorescence cylindrical, 100-250 mm long or more, usually purple or rose-colored, bristles about 20 mm long. Fruits are seeds.
- Propagation:** Prolific seed producer; seeds are spread by wind.
- Distribution:** Identified in Hawaii (Hawai'i, Kaho'olawe, Kaua'i, Lana'i, Maui, O'ahu), Guam, Kosrae, American Samoa
- Habitat/Ecology:** Weed of dry forest, roadsides, grasslands, coastal dunes, and lava fields. Very fire and drought tolerant. Stimulated by fire and rapidly colonizes burnt areas.
- Environmental impact:** Crowds out other herbs and seedlings. Forms thick stands that impede growth and regeneration of other plants, completely eliminating the native vegetation in time. Promotes fires by producing large quantities of biomass.
- Management:** Physical – Intensive grazing management in pastures and replanting trees in dryland forests.  
Chemical – Sensitive to glyphosate, imazapyr and hexazinone applied by spraying and by the drizzle method.  
Biological – The potential for biological control has not been evaluated. Unpalatable to cattle except for young shoots.

**PIER Risk Assessment: High Risk, score: 26**

Fountain grass - *Pennisetum setaceum*



a) *Pennisetum* bunchgrass (tufted) form



b) Close-up showing hairs on leaf sheath



c) *Pennisetum* tillers, leaves, & inflorescence



d) *Pennisetum* inflorescence



e) *Pennisetum* spikelets and bristles

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