

Tussock Paspalum: A New Invader in the Coastal Plain

by Dave Moorhead, Karan Rawlins, Chuck Bargeron

Tussock paspalum (*Paspalum quadrifarium*) has been observed spreading along highway ditches and riparian fringes in the lower Coastal Plain of Georgia. A perennial grass native to Uruguay, Paraguay, Brazil and Argentina, it was still being sold as an ornamental grass in the United States in 2008. It has been reported in disturbed habitats across the southeastern states and has become naturalized in Miami-Dade County, Florida. Australia lists tussock paspalum as a Class 3 Noxious Weed, defined as “plants that pose a serious threat to primary production or the environment of an area and are not widely distributed in the area but are likely to spread in the area or to another area.” It is considered highly invasive in Australia because of its ability to spread from disturbed areas along roadside edges into the bushland.

In the southeastern United States, tussock paspalum is found in areas along roadside ditches, streams and wetlands and under the shade of forest canopies on wet sites. Numerous infestations have been found in Tift County in the lower Coastal Plain of Georgia that are spreading east and west along major highway roadside ditches. Few of these locations are presently mapped. Tussock paspalum forms large, extremely dense tufts or bunches which allow it to out-compete native plant species in these areas. It reproduces and spreads quickly by seed and rhizomes, forming large, bluish-green bunches or tufts reaching 6 feet in height. It flowers and produces seed at least twice a year. The terminal panicles have from 15 to 44 branches which are 2.4 to 3.1 inches long. Leaves can be up to 15.7 inches long and 0.3 inches wide.

Tussock paspalum is distinctive because of its bluish-green color and large stature. However, along roadsides where it is mowed, new growth may look similar to vaseygrass (*Paspalum urvillei*) and johnsongrass (*Sorghum halepense*), both of which grow in large upright bunches or tufts. Little is published on control of tussock paspalum other than hand pulling of small clumps, and foliar applications of a glyphosate herbicide. Information on herbicides used in the control of other *Paspalum* spp. does not currently include tussock paspalum. The abundant seed production and rhizome mass may require follow-up treatments to eradicate an infestation. Herbicide treatments in wetland areas would require use of an aquatic labeled herbicide.

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Seedhead of tussock paspalum.

DAVID J. MOORHEAD, COURTESY OF BUGWOOD.ORG

Reported Distribution of Tussock Paspalum

EDDMapS Distribution:

This map is incomplete and is based only on current site and county level reports made by experts and records obtained from USDA Plants Database. For more information, visit www.eddmaps.org

