

Urochloa mutica (Forsk.) Nguyen



Common Name: Pará grass, California grass, buffalo grass, water grass, Scotch grass, Carib grass

Synonymy: *Brachiaria mutica* (Forsk.) Stapf, *Brachiaria purpurescens* (Raddi) Henr., *Panicum muticum* Forsk., *Panicum purpurescens* Raddi

Origin: Africa

Botanical Description: Perennial grass from widely creeping stolons. Stems reclining at base, rooting at the lower nodes, to 1 m (3 ft) tall when erect, to 3 m (15 ft) long when creeping; nodes swollen, densely hairy. Leaf sheaths with dense stiff hairs below, slightly hairy above; ligule a densely ciliate membrane; leaf blades flat, 10-15 mm (0.4-0.6 in) wide and 25-30 cm (10-12 in) long, glabrous but often with small fine hairs on the upper and lower surfaces of the base. Inflorescence a terminal panicle to 20 cm (8 in) long, with 8-20 ascending, alternate branches; spikelets (reduced flowers) dense on the branches, paired, each about 3 mm long, glabrous, often purple tinged.

Ecological Significance: Introduced in most tropical and subtropical regions of the world as a fodder grass, but also considered one of the world's worst weeds; reported as an agricultural pest in 23 crops in 34 countries, including the United States (Holm et al. 1977). Competes aggressively with other plants, with fast growth, high productivity, and allelopathic abilities that allow it to form dense monocultural stands (Chang-Hung 1977, Handley et al. 1989). Probably introduced into the Americas via Brazil "at an early date" (Hitchcock and Chase 1950); may have been introduced into

Florida as early as the late 1870s (Austin 1978); recommended for pasturage here in 1919 (Thompson 1919). Invades disturbed low areas such as canals, but also displaces native vegetation along river and lake shorelines and in marshes and swamps. Found in 51 public water bodies in 1982 and 183 water bodies by 1994—down from a 1986 high of 207, or 52% of Florida's public waters (Schardt and Schmitz 1991, Schardt 1997).

Distribution: Now commonly escaped from cultivation in central and south Florida. In Florida, documented as invading coastal berms, hardwood hammocks, mesic and wet flatwoods, bottomland forests, floodplain forests, stream and spring shores, and ruderal communities. Documented by herbarium specimens from 21 counties, from Pinellas on the west to Volusia on the east and south to Miami-Dade and Monroe counties, excluding the Keys (Wunderlin and Hansen 2004). Also reported from natural areas in Leon, Wakulla, Alachua, Lake, Orange, Pasco, Osceola, and Monroe, specifically the Florida Keys (FLEPPC 2005).

Life History: Flourishes in wet conditions, able to form a stolon mat 1 m (3 ft) or more in depth (Holm et al. 1977) and send floating stems of 6 m (18 ft) or more in length across slow-moving water (Handley and Ekern 1981). Also tolerant of drought and of brackish water, but susceptible to frost (Holm et al. 1977). Reproduces and spreads primarily by stem fragments (Sainty and Jacobs 1981). Flowers from September through December in Florida (Hall 1978), but production of fertile seeds apparently low (Thompson 1919).

