

Biosecurity alert

Coolatai grass *Hyparrhenia hirta*

Report all sightings of Coolatai grass. It is a threat to the ACT's biodiversity.



Coolatai grass is an invasive drought, fire and herbicide tolerant tussock forming perennial grass. It has become a major invasive species in northern New South Wales (NSW) and southern Queensland, dominating pastures over a range of soil types and conditions. An infestation has been discovered just south of the ACT. It is also one of the few perennial grasses capable of invading undisturbed natural ecosystems and is a major threat to natural biodiversity in stock routes, nature reserves and national parks.

Distinguishing features

Coolatai grass is a long lived summer-active perennial growing to 1.5 m. It produces short rhizomes that form a dense grass tussock. Its greyish-green leaves turn orange-red in winter, particularly after frost. The leaves are harsh to touch. Leaf sheaths are usually hairless and keeled. The leaf blade is flat and 2 - 3 mm wide with the ligule 2 - 3 mm long and minutely toothed.

The seedhead is a 'false panicle' consisting of paired racemes with 5 - 8 awns per raceme. The paired racemes are up to 35 mm long and arise from 3 - 8 cm long flower bracts. Half the flowers are male and therefore sterile.

What to do if you see them

- Do not pick or disturb plants
- Report all sightings to InvasiveWeeds@act.gov.au or phone: 13 22 81
- Your accurate information is vital to guide ACT Parks and Conservation Service staff to the site to destroy the plants
- Mark the site with flagging tape or other colourful material placed close to the plants
- Take a close-up photograph of the plants
- Take a grid reference or GPS point (note datum). Draw a map, recording the nearest access point, trail, walking track or creek