Mossman river grass

Cenchrus echinatus

Mossman river grass competes for moisture, nutrients and light in tropical and subtropical crops. The burrs can reduce wool value and make shearing hazardous. The spines of burrs penetrate hides, decreasing the value.

Legal requirements

Mossman river grass is not a prohibited or restricted invasive plant under the *Biosecurity Act 2014*. However, by law, everyone has a general biosecurity obligation (GBO) to take reasonable and practical measures to minimise the biosecurity risks associated with invasive plants under their control.

Local governments must have a biosecurity plan that covers invasive plants in their area. This plan may include actions to be taken on Mossman river grass. Some of these actions may be required under local laws. Contact your local government for more information.

Description

Mossman river grass or Mossman burr grass is an annual grass with prostate or erect stems forming loose tufts.

Seedlings are erect, robust, hairless and have bright mid-green leaves. The leaf sheaths are purplish red, especially in older seedlings.

Mature plants form prostrate or ascending tufts with stout stems up to 90 cm, more commonly up to 60 cm.

The leaves are flat and rather stiff, tapering towards the tip. They are 5–25 cm long and 3–12 mm wide.

The ligule (where the leaf blade becomes the leaf shaft to wrap around the stem) is a rim of short hairs, with a few scattered hairs on the leaf margin at the leaf base. The joints along the stems are hairless.

Queensland Government

Seed heads, borne on several stems per plant, are spike-like clusters of 12–14 burrs. Each burr (0.5–1 cm across) is a ball of stout, broad, spiny bristles that are joined together at the base. The burrs fall off readily when ripe and cling tightly to clothing, animal hides and human skin. They can also penetrate bare feet.

It flowers mostly during summer and autumn and will flower year-round in a moist tropical environment.

Mossman river grass mainly spreads by burr seeds, in fodder and soil, and by burrs attached to animals, clothing, bags, machinery and vehicles.

Habitat and distribution

Mossman river grass is native to Central America and southern North America.

It prefers sandy soils, including at the beach, footpaths, roadsides, lawns, parks and disturbed areas. Mossman river grass is present in drier inland areas of Australia.

Control

The most effective control method is to destroy young plants before they set seed. This can be done by cultivation, pulling by hand, burning off with heat using flame throwers or steam jets, or by spraying with herbicide.

Herbicides for the control of Mossman river grass (out of crop) are provided in Table 1 below. Many selective herbicides are registered for in-crop situations but not for non-crop situations. The herbicides listed below are permitted for the specified situations under APVMA permit PER9792 (expires 30/11/2025).

More information

More information is available from your local government or visit biosecurity.qld.gov.au.

Table 1. Herbicides for the control of Mossman river grass

Situation	Herbicide	Rate	Registration details	Comments
Agriculture: pasture, grazed woodlands, agricultural areas prior to sowing, tree and vine crops, lucerne and agricultural non-crop situations. Non-crop situations: wasteland, woodland, forest and conservation areas, margins of aquatic areas, roadsides and easements, rights-of-way, commercial and industrial areas, areas surrounding agricultural buildings. Domestic and public service areas: Turf, domestic areas, golf courses, playing fields, public service areas.	Glyphosate 360 g/L (e.g. Weedmaster Duo®) and other formulations	700 mL per 100 L water For other formulations consult the permit PER9792	APVMA permit PER9792 (expires 30/11/2025)	Spot spray Consult label and permit for details and critical comments
		3.3 L per 10 L water For other formulations consult the permit PER9792		Wick wiper Consult label and permit for details and critical comments
Agriculture: pasture, grazed woodlands and agricultural non-crop situations. Non-crop situations: wasteland, forest and conservation areas, roadsides and easements, rights-of-way, commercial and industrial areas, areas surrounding agricultural buildings. Domestic and public service areas: golf courses, public service areas.	Flupropanate 745 g/L (e.g. Taskforce®)	300 mL per 100 L water		Spot spray Consult label and permit for details and critical comments
		500 mL per 10 L water		Wick wiper Consult label and permit for details and critical comments
Non-agricultural areas, domestic and public service areas, commercial and industrial areas, bushland/native forests, roadsides, rights-of-way, vacant lots, wastelands, wetlands, dunal and coastal areas.	Haloxyfop 512 g/L (e.g Verdict 520)	25 mL/100 L water plus wetting agent or spray oil or 250 mL/ha	APVMA permit PER11643 (expires 30/04/2027)	Spot spray Consult label and permit for details and critical comments
	Fluazifop 212 g/L (e.g. Fusilier)	100 mL/100 L water water plus wetting agent or spray oil or 1 L/ha		

Read the label carefully before use. Always use the herbicide in accordance with the directions on the label.

06/24