

INVASIVE PLANTS: FOUNTAIN GRASS

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What is both an ornamental grass and a state-listed noxious weed? If you answered fountain grass, you are correct! Fountain grass (*Pennisetum setaceum*) checks both boxes – it was planted in urban landscapes but is now established in desert mountain parks and preserves in Phoenix and Tucson. In early 2020, fountain grass was added to the Arizona noxious weed list as a Class C noxious weed, meaning it is “widespread but may be recommended for active control based on risk assessment.”



Photo by W. Sommers, DFFM

Fountain grass is one of at least seven invasive plants that threaten the Sonoran Desert. These ‘desert invaders’ as they are called, outcompete native plants, decrease biodiversity and increase wildfire risk. Fountain grass, like buffelgrass and red brome, can form dense patches that carry fire. Wildfires in the Sonoran Desert are becoming more frequent, and we are at risk of losing Saguaros and other cactus species not adapted to withstand fire.

In April, the Arizona Native Plant Society with support from multiple partners developed a fountain grass brochure. The brochure includes tips on how to identify the plant, control options and native alternatives for landscapes. For more information, and to view the brochure, please visit

<https://www.swvma.org/invasive-non-native-plants/fountain-grass/>.