



# Invasive Plant Alert<sup>1</sup>

## Ravenna grass

*Tripidium ravennae* ssp. *ravennae* (L.) H. Scholz.  
(Syn: *Ripidium ravennae*, Trinius  
*Saccharum ravennae*, *Erianthus ravennae*)

Planted as an ornamental alternative to pampas grass, ravenna escapes easily with lightweight seeds that disperse by wind and water. Ravenna quickly establishes in disturbed areas, and is especially competitive in riparian areas.



Figure 1 White Vein in leaf blades.  
Photo Credit Courtesy Missouri Botanical Garden.

## Where to Look

Ravenna grows best in moist places such as marshes and riparian areas. However, it grows in a variety of soil and canopy conditions and is highly competitive, but provides little wildlife habitat. It spreads from roadside plantings into other disturbed edge habitats.

A Eurasian cousin to sugar cane, ravenna is a species to watch in the Mid-Atlantic. It has been found in Delaware, Maryland, the District of Columbia, as well as many other states from Florida to Michigan to California.



Figure 2. *Tripidium ravennae*. Daderot. Wikimedia Commons

## Identifying the Plant

Ravenna grass is a bunchgrass with long flowering cane-like stalks that can reach heights of 6-12 feet with a basal area several feet in diameter. It usually grows in clumps and develops a diffuse root system. It can be difficult to identify when immature and lacking seed heads.

The bottom of the leaf has a prominent white vein running the length. The leaves are bilaterally serrated and the leaves and stems have fine hairs.

The flower heads are pale, silvery, feathery plumes at the tips of tall flower stalks that appear in late summer and early fall. Each plant can support multiple seed heads that produce thousands of seeds. Clipping and bagging seed heads is important to control spread. The seed heads can be confused with other common grasses such as bushy beardgrass (*Andropogon glomeratus*), satin tail (*Imperata brevifolia*) and phragmites (*Phragmites australis*). Close

examination reveals ravenna seeds appear to be linked in continuous chain-like strands while the seed heads of the other grasses appear to be diffuse and loose.

## How to get rid of it?

Control is difficult. The most effective method of removal is physically removing the plant and root system by pulling or digging it out. To prevent re-establishment, move plants to a dry area away from water.

Chemical control through foliar spot application of non-selective herbicides has been successful. The Lake Mead EPMT has had success using Rodeo (5%) and Polaris AQ (1%) to control ravenna.



Figure 3 Plume. Joseph M. DiTomaso, University of California - Davis, Bugwood.org

## Resources

Bugwood Wiki on Ravenna grass: [http://wiki.bugwood.org/Saccharum\\_ravennae](http://wiki.bugwood.org/Saccharum_ravennae)

Plant Invaders of Mid-Atlantic Natural Areas, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (2010). <http://www.nps.gov/plants/alien/pubs/midatlantic/plants-to-watch.htm>

<sup>1</sup> This species has been identified as a potential or emerging threat to natural areas in the mid-Atlantic region