



# Cogongrass in Georgia Winter 2024 Update

January 1, 2023 - December 31, 2023

Forest Health Staff

## Record high number of cogongrass detections made in 2023.

In 2023, cogongrass was detected for the first time in Bryan, Cook, Jeff Davis and Quitman Counties. There were 175 new detections in 2023, bringing the number of known cogongrass spots in the state to 1951, scattered across 77 counties. Overall, these values reflect an approximate 15% increase in new detections in 2023 compared to the 152 detections in 2022. Furthermore, there were 125 sites eradicated in 2023 compared to 128 sites in 2022. The 1951 cogongrass spots encompass a total of 492 acres. The status and treatments for each spot varies. The Georgia Forestry Commission recognizes a spot as eradicated after three consecutive years of finding no cogongrass resprouts. Presently, **1352 spots** have been eradicated, **151 spots** have been negative for two years and **208 spots** have been negative for one year. The remaining **240 spots** were classified as active. Figure 1, below, displays the annual cogongrass status from 2017 to 2023. Overall, approximately 88% of all known spots are now negative for cogongrass. A breakdown into the various categories based on percentages can be seen in Figure 2, below. Landowners with questions regarding the status of the cogongrass spot(s) on their property should contact their regional Forest Health specialist.

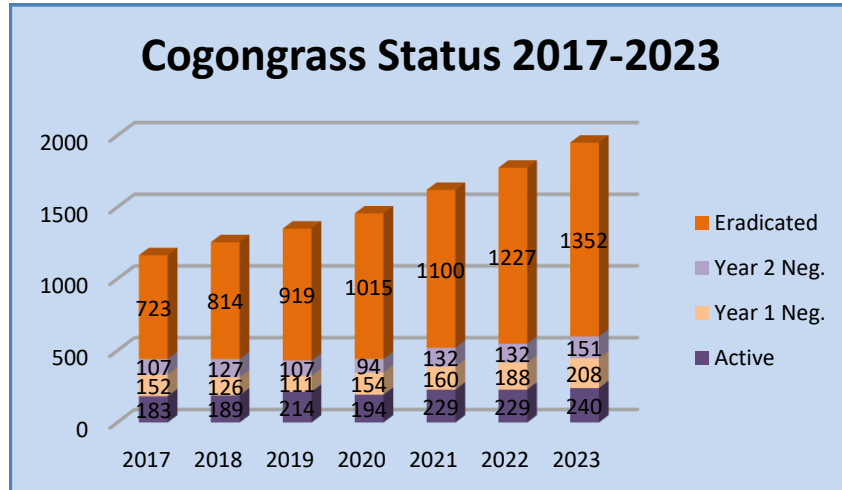


Figure 1: Cogongrass Status Chart.

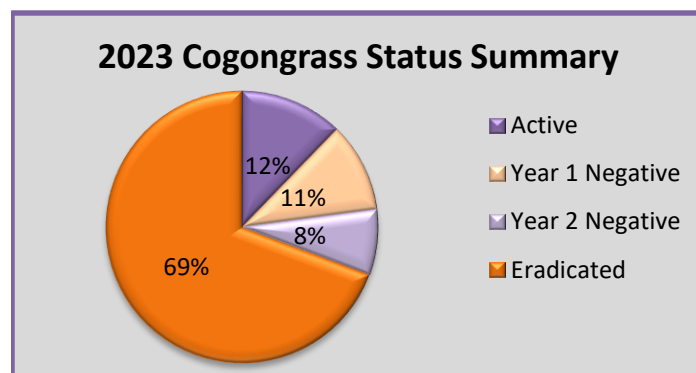
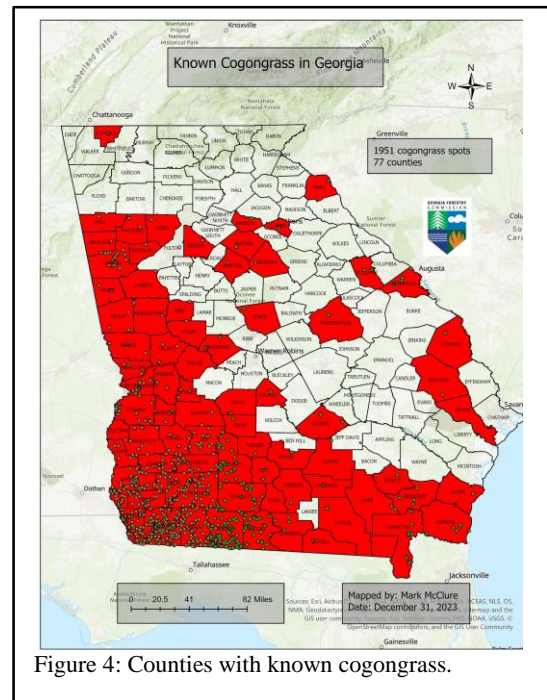
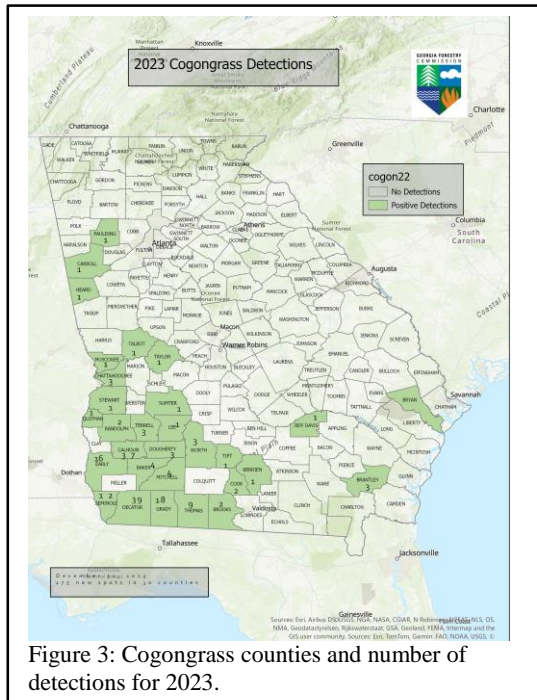


Figure 2: Cogongrass status classified categorically by percentage.

## Known cogongrass locations in Georgia.

The majority of new cogongrass detections continue to be found in southwest Georgia. However, additional spots are located along the western side of the state bordering Alabama, along with spots in southeast Georgia near the Florida border. Figure 3 is a map displaying cogongrass counties and number of detections for 2023, while Figure 4 displays all counties with known cogongrass.



## Which counties had the most detections in 2023?

The top six reporting counties in 2023 were Decatur, Calhoun, Grady, Early, Seminole and Thomas. The graph below, (figure 5) charts the number of new detections in each county.

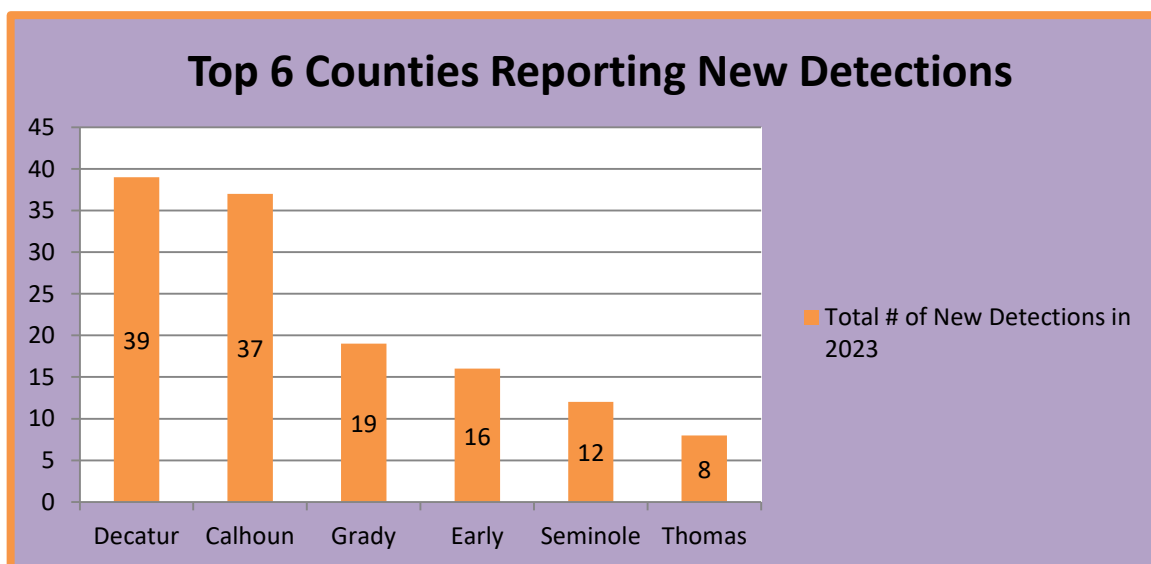


Figure 5: Top six cogongrass reporting counties in 2023.

### Where are cogongrass sites being detected?

The most common cogongrass detections in Georgia are located within thinned pine stands or along road and utility rights-of-way. Approximately 76% of all cogongrass detections have been in woodland areas, primarily thinned pine stands, and 17% along rights-of-way. An additional six percent have been unique detections in places such as pastures, pond dams, urban landscapes, flower beds, welcome centers, wildlife food plots, and in coastal sand dunes. These sites are of special interest to specialists tracking the movement and spread of this exotic, invasive species.

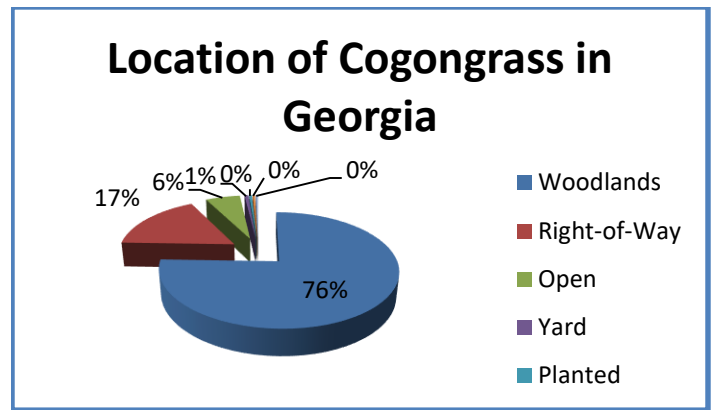


Figure 7: Cogongrass locations by site type.

### Overall, what counties are impacted the most by cogongrass?

The southwest corner of the state continues to be the cogongrass epicenter in Georgia. Decatur, Early, Seminole, Grady, Thomas, Calhoun, Mitchell, Baker and Worth Counties, located in southwest Georgia, and Carroll County, located in west Georgia, complete the top 10 ranking counties by number of detections. Figure 8, below, displays the total number of cogongrass acres adjacent to the total number of spots.

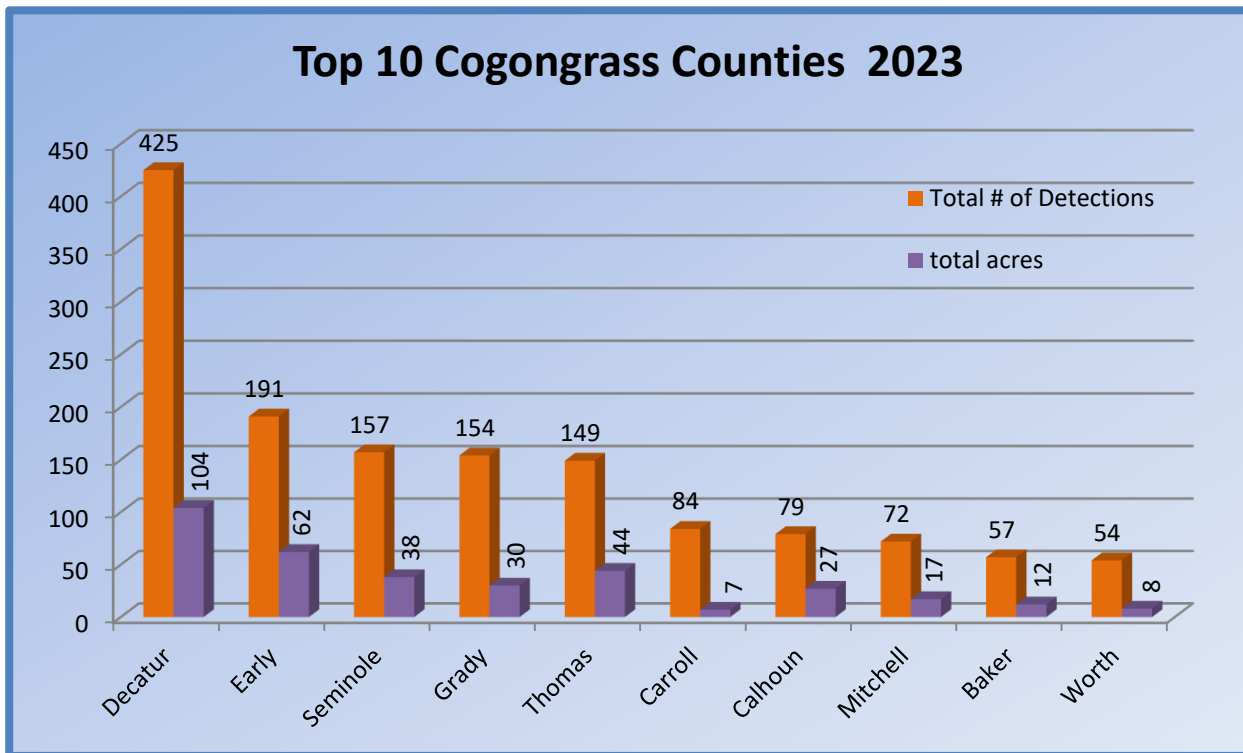


Figure 8: Top ten cogongrass counties.

## What is the cogongrass status in these counties?

Approximately 88% of all known cogongrass spots in Georgia are considered inactive. However, this percentage varies among counties. Figure 9, below, displays the number of active and inactive spots in the top 10 counties.

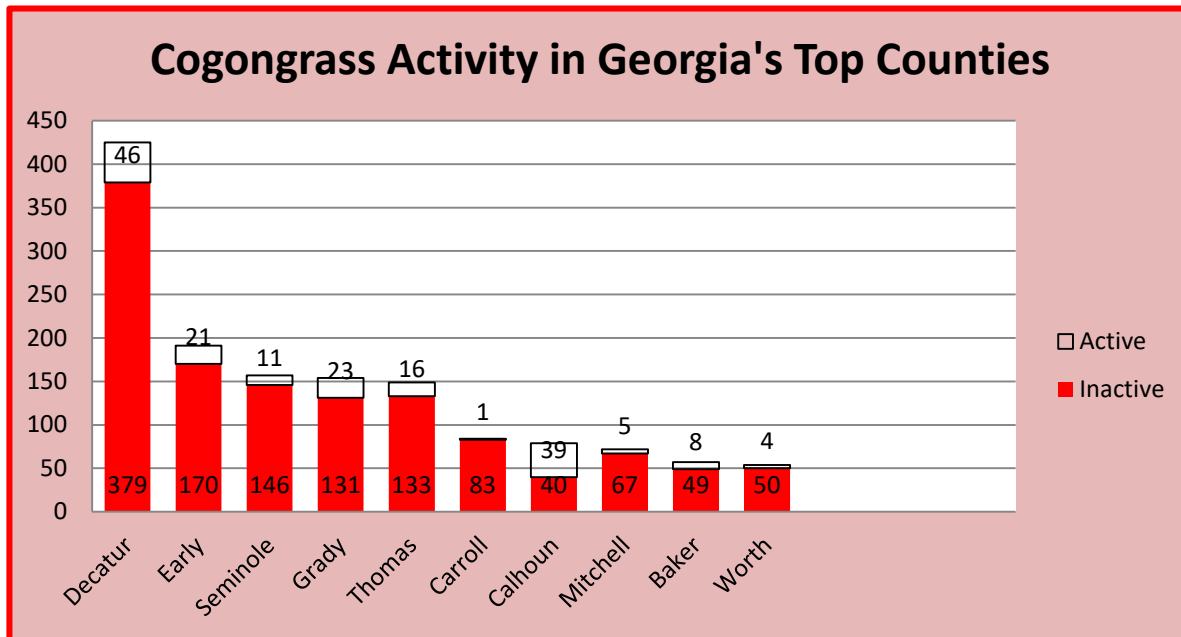


Figure 9: Cogongrass activity in Georgia's top ten counties.

**How many cogongrass spots have been detected annually since the Georgia Forestry Commission began its lead role in 2007?** Cogongrass detections have ranged from a low of 37 in 2007 to a high of 175 in 2023. Over this time period there have been an average of 111 cogongrass detections annually. Figure 10, below, shows annual detections since 2009.

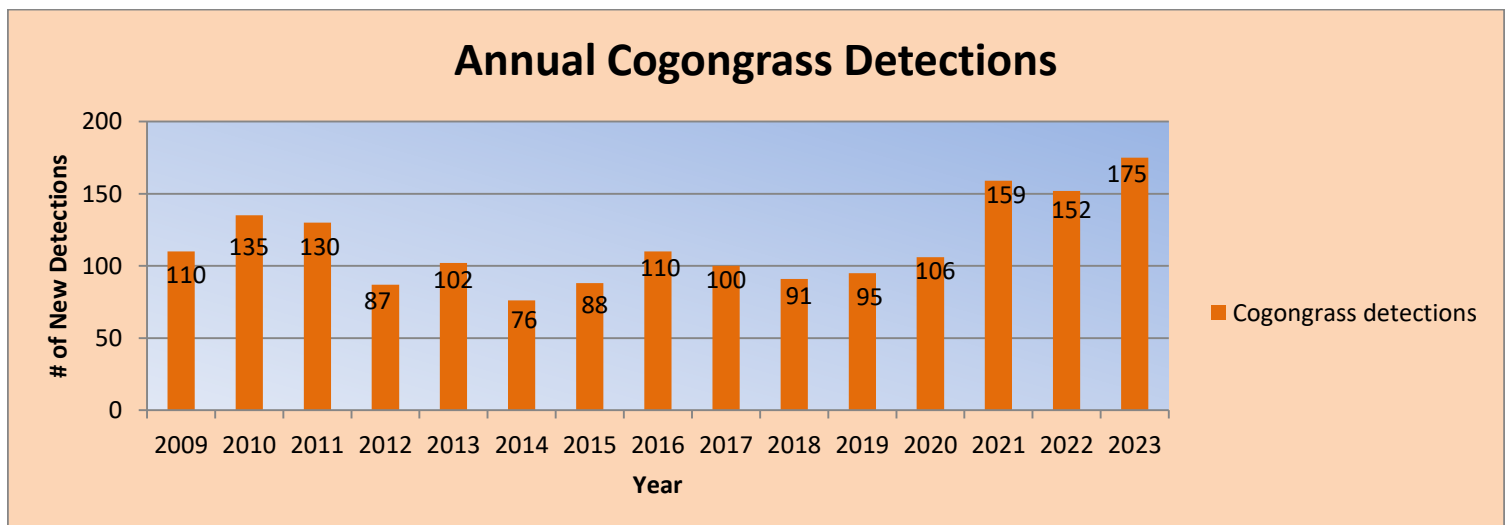


Figure 10: Annual cogongrass detections.

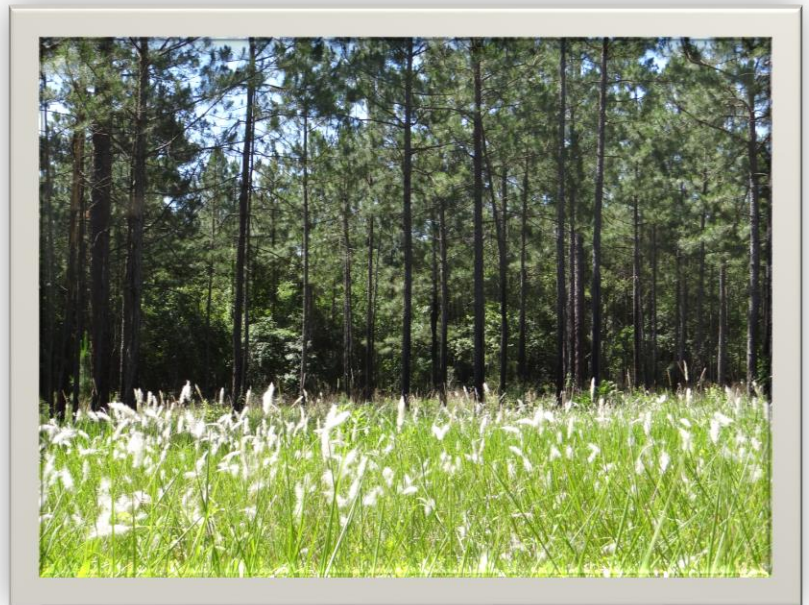
## Georgia cogongrass facts as of 2023:

- This marked the 17<sup>th</sup> year the Georgia Forestry Commission has held the lead role in the cogongrass detection and eradication program.
- The Georgia Forestry Commission will continue to treat new cogongrass detections for landowners at no cost.
- All cogongrass spots continue to be monitored and treated annually until eradicated.
- Workshops, presentations, field days, etc. continue to be delivered to further educate Georgians about identifying and controlling invasive species. Thirty-one landowner programs, workshops, and field days were conducted, delivering the cogongrass message to more than 74,218 landowners and natural resource professionals. Many more programs were delivered by our task force partners.
- 88% of the total number of spots are negative (yr. 1, yr. 2, or eradicated).
- 80% of the total cogongrass acreage is negative.
- The average size cogongrass spot is between 0.10 and 0.25 acres. The largest new spot treated in 2023 was 1.5 acres.
- One hundred seventy-five new detections in 2023 was the largest single year total since the program began.
- Seventy-seven counties have had positive cogongrass detections. Thirty-eight of 77 cogongrass counties are now negative.

## Doug Reed, manager of Notchaway Plantation, was the cogongrass detection winner for 2023!

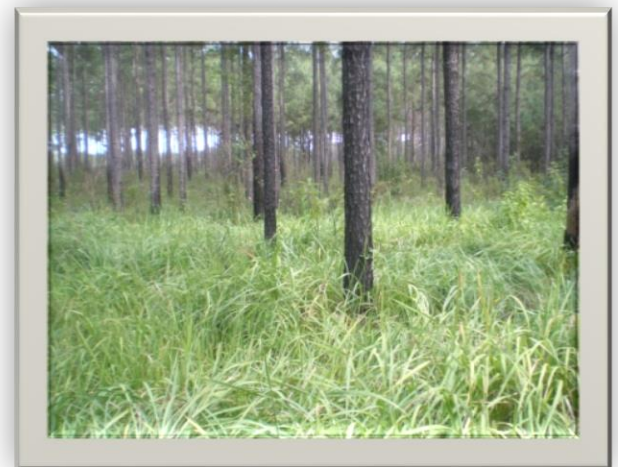
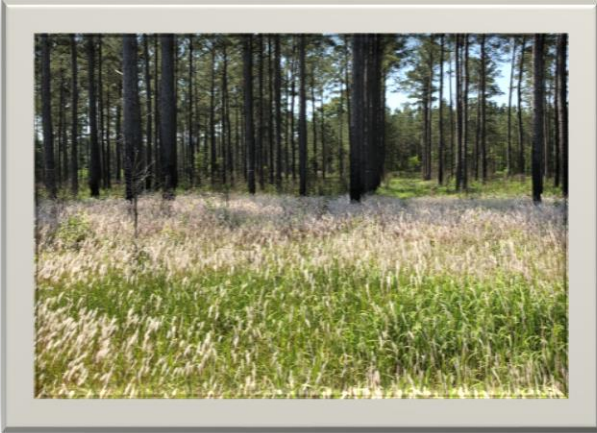
The Georgia Forestry Commission Forest Health staff held a contest to recognize the person detecting the greatest number of cogongrass spots. Numerous natural resource professionals and landowners reported new cogongrass findings. However, Doug Reed, manager of Notchaway Plantation in Calhoun county detected the most spots. Doug was awarded a forester orange vest along with a Forest Health notepad.

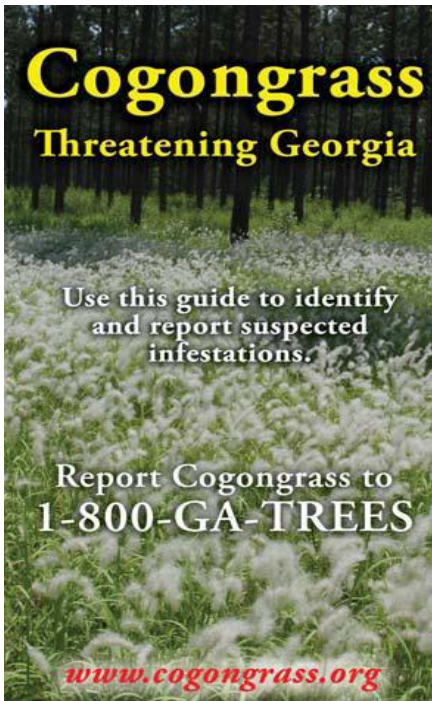
The GFC Forest Health Dept. will once again award a prize to the person who locates the most positive detections in 2024. Therefore, all landowners and resource professionals are encouraged to search for cogongrass during the 2024 calendar year.



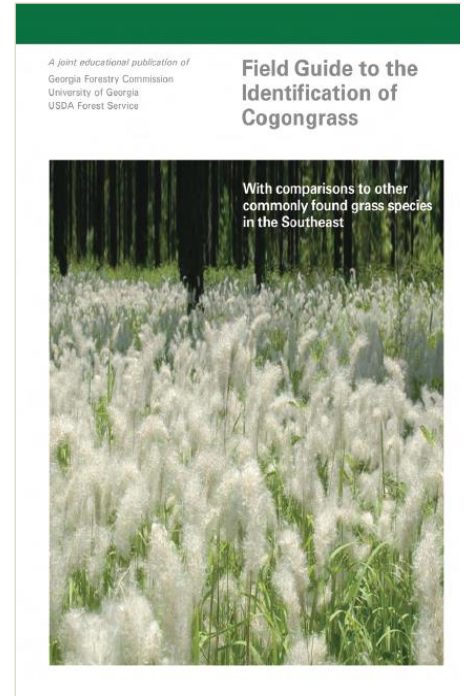
## How to identify cogongrass:

Spring flowering season is the easiest time to detect cogongrass infestations. Cogongrass primarily flowers between April and early June. The white, fluffy seed heads are visible from a distance. However, the distinct golden brown coloration in late fall through winter following frost makes cogongrass visible during the colder months of the year as well. Cogongrass is most difficult to detect during the growing season. The most distinguishable feature of cogongrass is its dense, sharp, pointed rhizome root system, and it is recommended the rhizomes be dug up to make a positive identification.





**Cogongrass identification brochure and pocket ID available from the Georgia Forestry Commission.**  
 Contact your local GFC office or regional Forest Health specialist to obtain copies of these publications.



### How do I report a suspected cogongrass spot?

Call your county Georgia Forestry Commission office or contact your regional Forest Health specialist. A resource professional will visit the site to make a positive identification. The Georgia Forestry Commission will continue to spray all cogongrass detections in 2024 at no cost to the landowner. Landowners are required to sign a spray agreement with the Georgia Forestry Commission to legally allow resource professionals to access the property and spray the identified cogongrass. All positive detections are monitored annually until eradicated.

Landowners are encouraged to share information concerning cogongrass with their family, friends, and adjoining landowners. It is important to realize that invasive plants such as cogongrass disrupt natural ecosystems and displace natural plant communities. Therefore, invasive species have a negative impact on our forest resources.

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