



Cogongrass in Georgia Winter 2025 Update

January 1, 2024 - December 31, 2024

Forest Health Staff

Cogongrass detections surpass the 200 mark in 2024.

In 2024, cogongrass was detected for the first time in Dodge County. There were 225 new detections in 2024, bringing the number of known cogongrass spots in the state to 2176, scattered across 78 counties. Overall, these values reflect an approximate 29% increase in new detections in 2024 compared to the 175 detections in 2023. Furthermore, there were 148 sites eradicated in 2024 compared to 125 sites in 2023. The 2176 cogongrass spots encompass a total of 547 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. Since 2007, **1497 spots** have been eradicated, **159 spots** have been negative for two years and **167 spots** have been negative for one year. The remaining **353 spots** are classified as active. Figure 1, below, displays the annual cogongrass status from 2018 to 2024. Overall, approximately 84% 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.

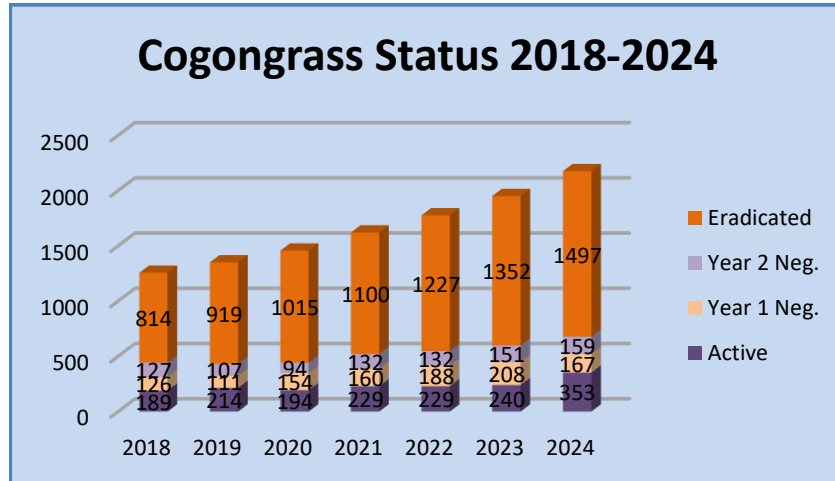


Figure 1: Cogongrass Status Chart.

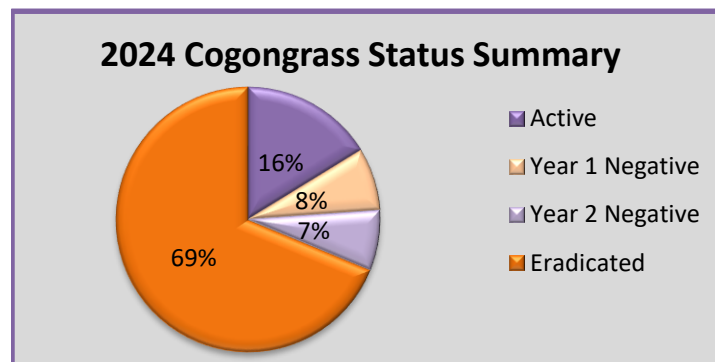
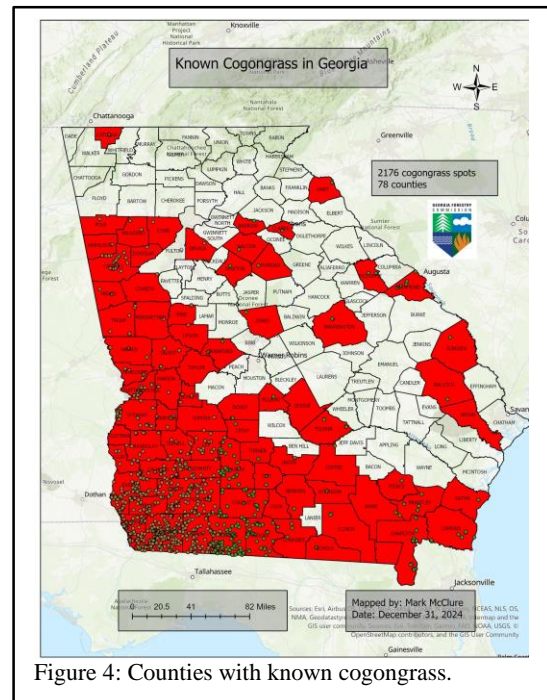
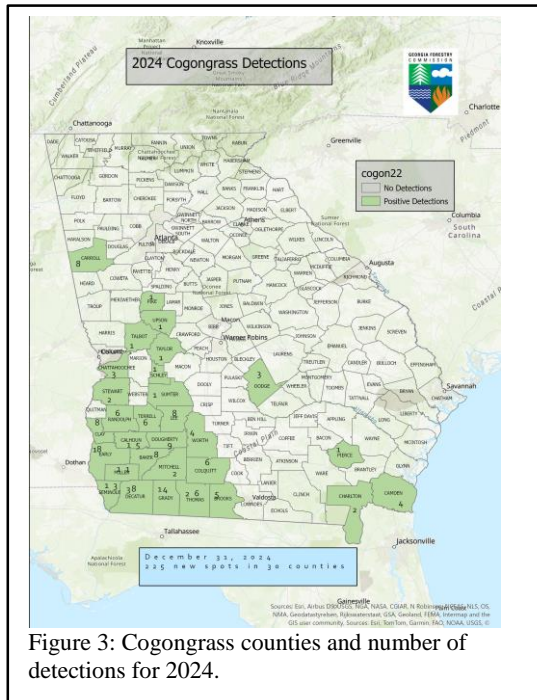


Figure 2: Cogongrass status classified categorically by percentage.

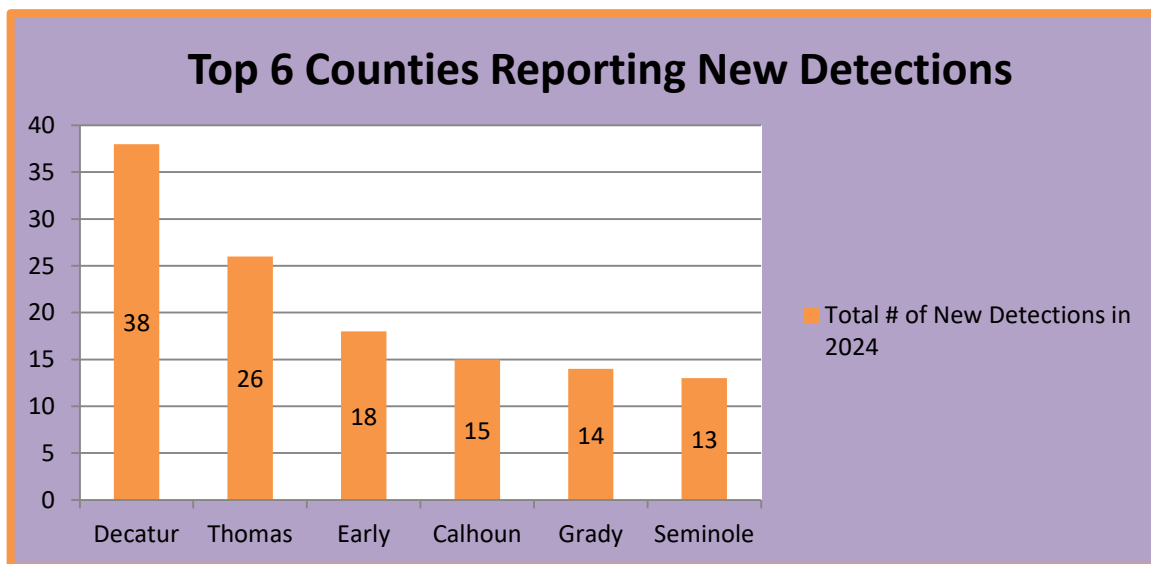
Known cogongrass locations in Georgia.

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 2024, while Figure 4 displays all counties with known cogongrass.



Which counties had the most detections in 2024?

The top six reporting counties in 2024 were Decatur, Thomas, Early, Calhoun, Grady and Seminole. The graph below, (figure 5) charts the number of new detections in each county.



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.

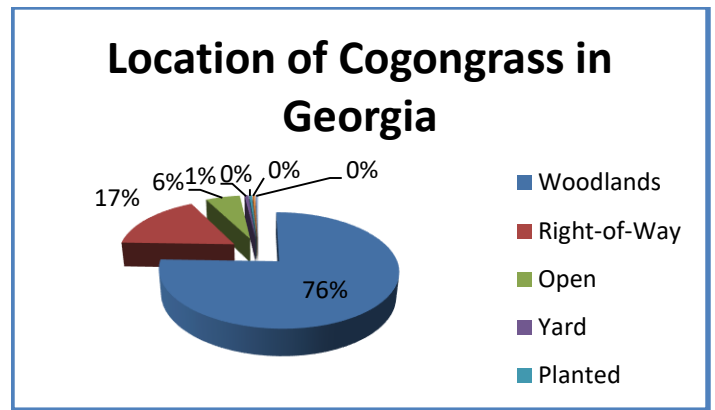


Figure 7: Cogongrass locations by site type.

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, Thomas, Seminole, Grady, Calhoun, Mitchell, Baker and Miller 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.

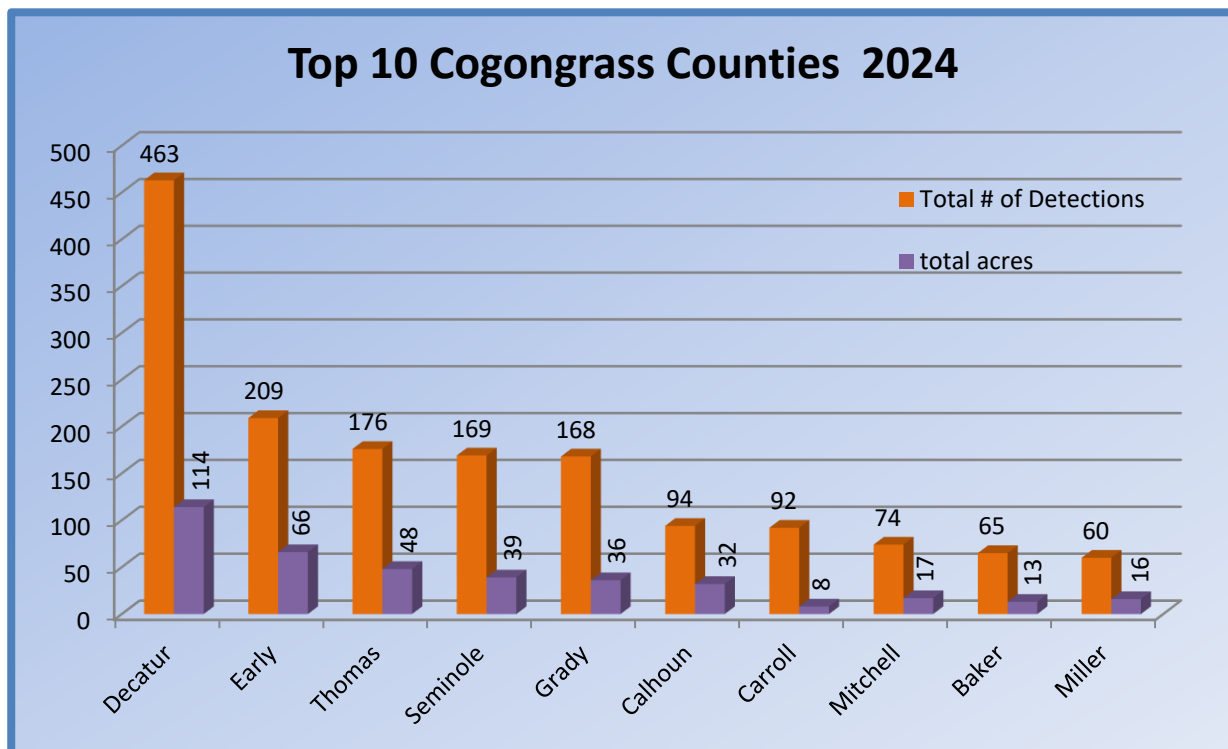


Figure 8: Top ten cogongrass counties.

What is the cogongrass status in these counties?

Approximately 84% 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.

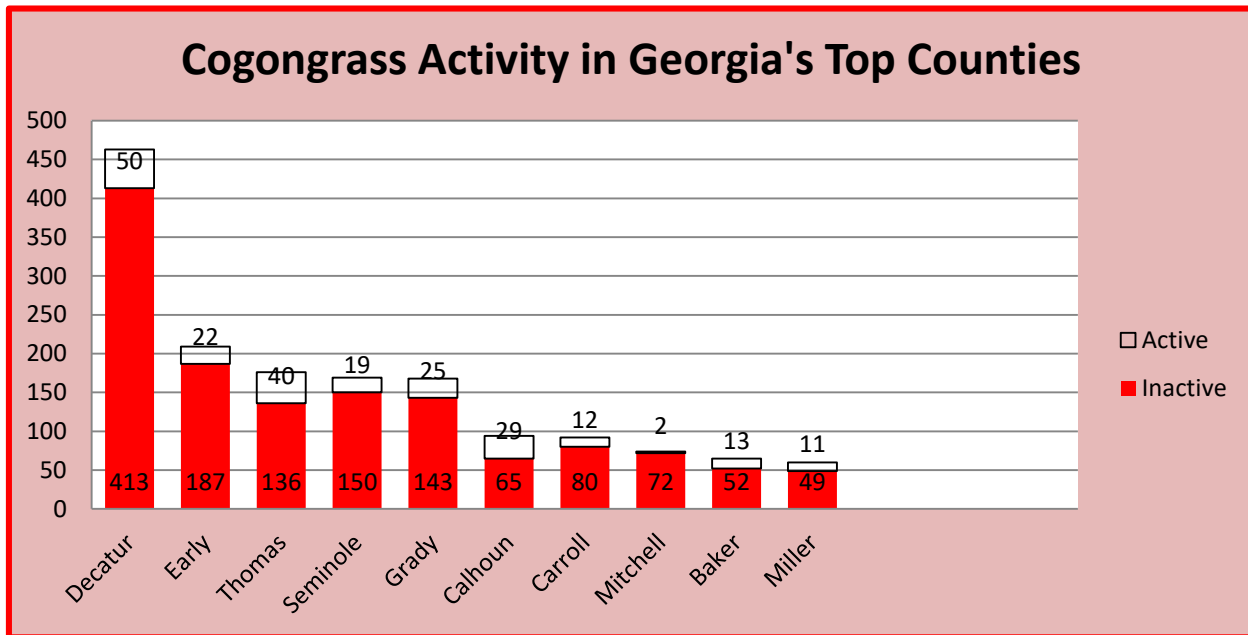


Figure 9: Cogongrass activity in Georgia's top ten counties.

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 225 in 2024. Over this 18-year time period there have been an average of 118 cogongrass detections annually. However, since Hurricane Michael in October of 2018 there have been an average of 153 cogongrass detections annually. Figure 10, below, shows annual detections since 2009.

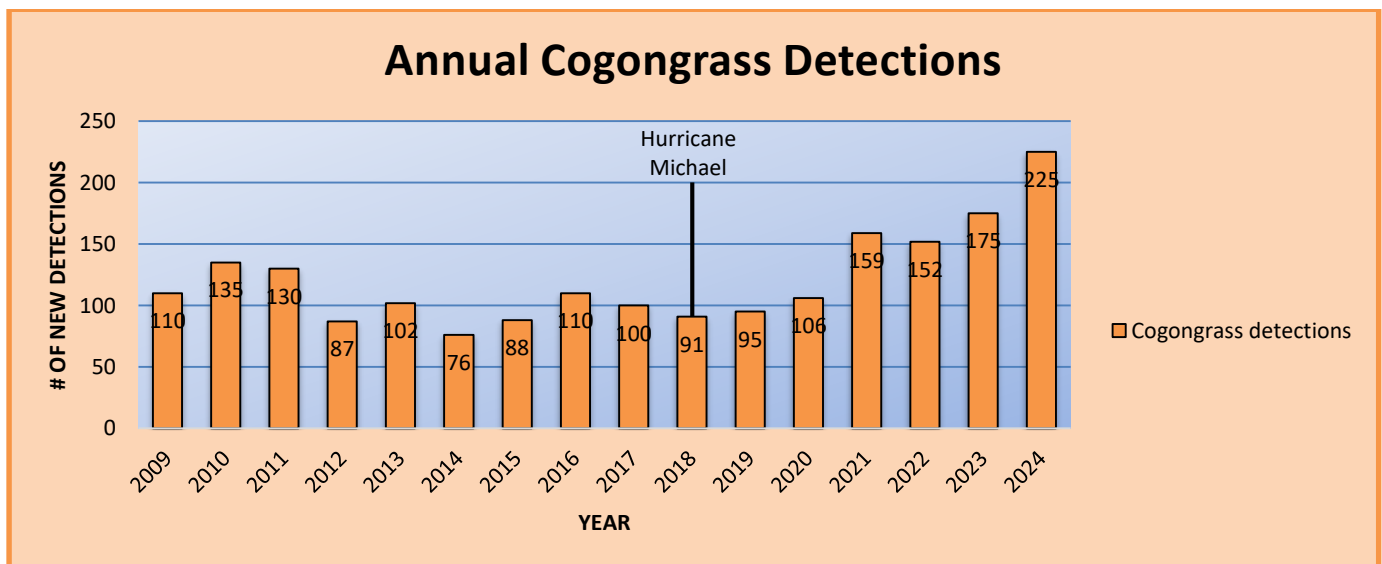


Figure 10: Annual cogongrass detections.

Georgia cogongrass facts as of 2024:

- This marked the 18th year the Georgia Forestry Commission has held the lead role in the cogongrass detection and eradication program.
- USDA-APHIS provided federal funding to the GFC in 2024 to maintain 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. Forty-three landowner programs, workshops, and field days were conducted, delivering the cogongrass message to more than 98,365 landowners and natural resource professionals. Many more programs were delivered by our task force partners.
- 84% of the total number of spots are negative (yr. 1, yr. 2, or eradicated).
- 77% of the total cogongrass acreage is negative.
- The average size cogongrass spot is between 0.10 and 0.20 acres. The largest new spot treated in 2024 was 3.4 acres.
- Two hundred twenty-five new detections in 2024 was the largest single year total since the program began. It exceeded the previous record high in 2023 of 175.
- Seventy-eight counties have had positive cogongrass detections. Thirty-three of 77 cogongrass counties are now negative.

Bryan Cottles, Decatur/Seminole Chief Ranger, was the cogongrass detection winner for 2024!

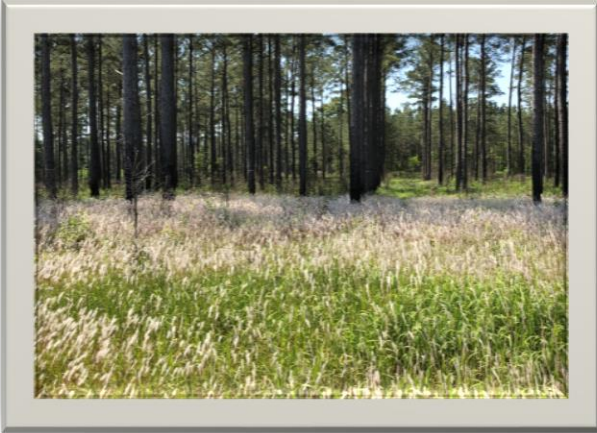
The Georgia Forestry Commission Forest Health staff held a contest to recognize the person detecting the greatest number of cogongrass spots. Numerous GFC personnel, natural resource professionals and landowners reported new cogongrass findings in 2024. However, Bryan Cottles, Decatur/Seminole Chief Ranger, detected the most spots. Bryan was awarded a container of glyphosate herbicide along with a Forest Health notepad.

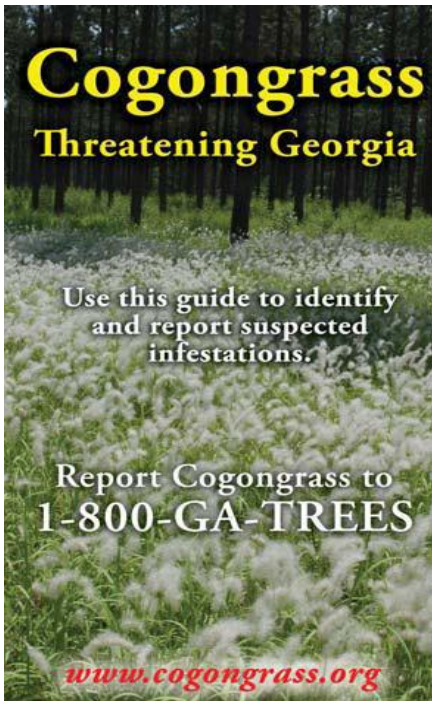
The GFC Forest Health Dept. will once again award a prize to the person who locates the most positive detections in 2025. Therefore, all landowners and resource professionals are encouraged to search for cogongrass during the 2025 calendar year.



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 2025 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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