



# Cogongrass in Georgia Spring 2023 Update

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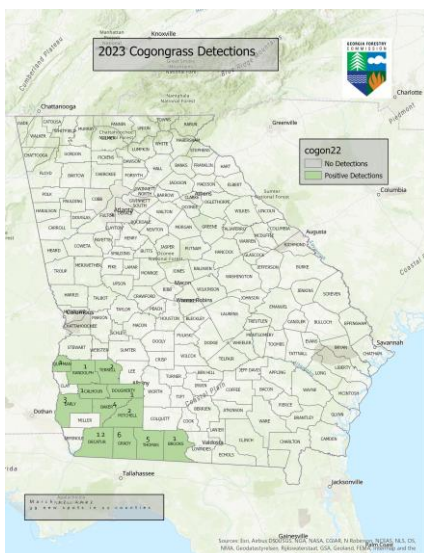
## 2023: Above Average Winter Temperatures in South Georgia Initiate Early Cogongrass Flowering

The Georgia Forestry Commission has begun the 17th year of its campaign to fight the exotic, invasive weed known as cogongrass. Thirty-nine new detections were confirmed between January 1, 2023 through March 17, 2023 in Georgia, bringing the statewide cumulative total to 1,815 cogongrass spots. This number is slightly lower than the 45 detections made during the same time period in 2022.

Above-average winter temperatures during the winter of 2022-2023 are contributing to early cogongrass “green-up” and flowering. Therefore, landowners and managers are urged to monitor their properties, especially pine woodlands, looking carefully for the presence of this invasive grass.

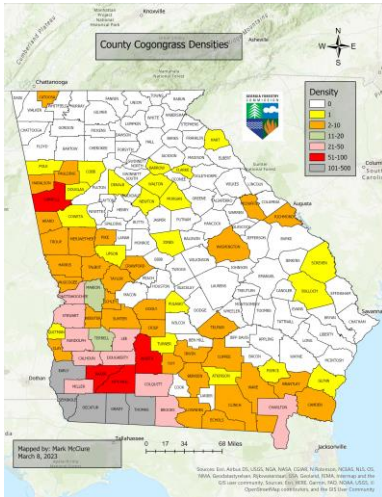
New detections have been reported by landowners, registered consulting foresters, forest industry personnel, Department of Defense, prescribe burn practitioners, and personnel from the Georgia Forestry Commission and Department of Natural Resources.

All new detections have been located in the southwest region of the state. The map below displays the 12 counties reporting new spots in 2023. Quitman is the only county reporting cogongrass for the first time. In addition to Quitman, counties with new detections include: Baker-4; Brooks-1; Calhoun-1; Decatur-12; Dougherty-1; Early-3; Grady-6; Mitchell-2; Randolph-1; Terrell-2; and Thomas-5. Spot size this year has ranged from 0.02 acres to 1.50 acres, with an average of 0.19 acres.



# Georgia Forestry Commission to recognize Most Cogongrass Detections by an Individual in 2023.

The GFC Forest Health staff will once again recognize the individual who reports the most cogongrass spots with a gift! All landowners and resource professionals are encouraged to continue searching their properties for cogongrass during the 2023 calendar year. The fluffy, white flowers appearing in spring between March and May enhances visibility and identification. Continue reporting detections to your local Forestry Commission county office, or directly to your regional Forest Health specialist. Marshall Knop, Rosemary Plantation manager, was the cogongrass detection winner in 2022.



## Cumulative Cogongrass Detections per County:

The map at left shows cogongrass densities across the state of Georgia. The southwest region of the state is Georgia's cogongrass epicenter, with Decatur, Seminole, Early, Thomas, and Grady Counties having the greatest activity.

## Physical Characteristics Associated with Identifying Cogongrass:

Spring flowering season is the most common 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, yet throughout the year, the most distinguishable feature of cogongrass is its dense, sharp, pointed rhizome root system. Therefore, it is recommended rhizomes be dug up to make a positive identification.



## How to Identify Cogongrass Flowers?

Cogongrass shoots are beginning to emerge. It's time now to begin looking for cogongrass in its flowering stage. The flowers are between two and eight inches long, with light, fluffy dandelion-like seeds that are white in color and cylindrical in shape. Flowering time is dependent on the local climate, but usually occurs from late March through early June. The photos below show cogongrass flowering at its peak dispersal period.



## Besides Flowering, What are Key Identification Features?




**Rhizomes:** Dense mat, sharp-pointed, covered in flaky scales, bright white under scales, strongly segmented.

**Leaves:** Two- to five-foot-blades between a half- and one-inch wide, off-centered white mid-rib, margins finely serrated, green/yellowish-green in color in summer, with a tan color in winter.



**Circular growth pattern:** Grass areas will normally grow in a circular pattern.



# Cogongrass


*(Imperata cylindrica)*

Wanted DEAD

...Not ALIVE


**Facts**

- Invasive from Asia
- Considered one of the "World's Worst Weeds"
- Reduces forest productivity
- Destroys wildlife habitat
- Displaces native flora & fauna
- Circular growth pattern




**Flower**

- 2-8 inches in length
- Silvery white in color
- Light fluffy seeds
- Blooms March - mid June



**Leaves**

- 2-5 ft. long blades
- 1/2-1 inch wide
- Off centered white mid-rib
- Margins finely serrate
- Green-yellowish green in color




**Rhizomes**


- Dense mat
- Many sharp points
- Strongly segmented
- Covered in flaky scales
- Bright white under scales



**Growing Season**



**Dormant Season**



Report all potential detections to the local Georgia Forestry Commission office.

www.gatrees.org      www.cogongrass.org

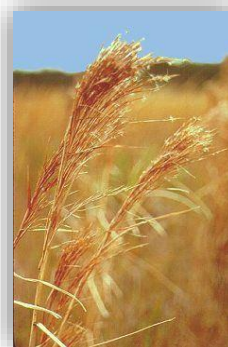
## What Other Common Species Resemble Cogongrass?

**Vasey Grass:** Flower/seed head not fluffy, but loosely branched and spreading. Leaves arise from apparent stem. Base is thick and flattened, often with a reddish-purple color. Plant is very bunched in appearance. Contains a thin root system, not extensive, and lacking thick, segmented rhizomes.



**Silver Beardgrass:** Looks very similar but often somewhat branched and blooms later in the year (June-August). Leaves are not serrated and arise from an apparent stem. The midrib is not as apparent. The plant base has a strongly bunched appearance, with apparent stems. Root system is fibrous, lacking rhizomes.

**Broomsedge:** Flower/seed head is thin and sparsely flowered, blooms in late summer. Leaves are thin and often curled, and arise from an apparent stem. The plant base has a strongly bunched appearance, with very apparent stems. The root system is fibrous, lacking rhizomes.



**Johnsongrass:** Flower/seed head is not fluffy, but loosely branched and spreading. Leaves are wider than cogongrass, edges are not serrated. The plant base is rounded, but very thick in comparison to cogongrass. The plant does not appear bunched. The rhizome system is not as extensive. Rhizomes lack scaly coverings.

**How do I Report Cogongrass?** To report a new potential cogongrass spot, contact your local Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC) office or your regional Forest Health specialist. The GFC will continue spraying cogongrass in 2023 at no charge 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.

## Where can I find additional information on cogongrass?

For additional information, visit the following webpages:

Georgia Forestry Commission at [www.gatrees.org](http://www.gatrees.org)

<http://www.cogongrass.org/>

[www.bugwood.org](http://www.bugwood.org)

[www.gainvasives.org](http://www.gainvasives.org)

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