



Cogongrass in Georgia Spring 2026 Update

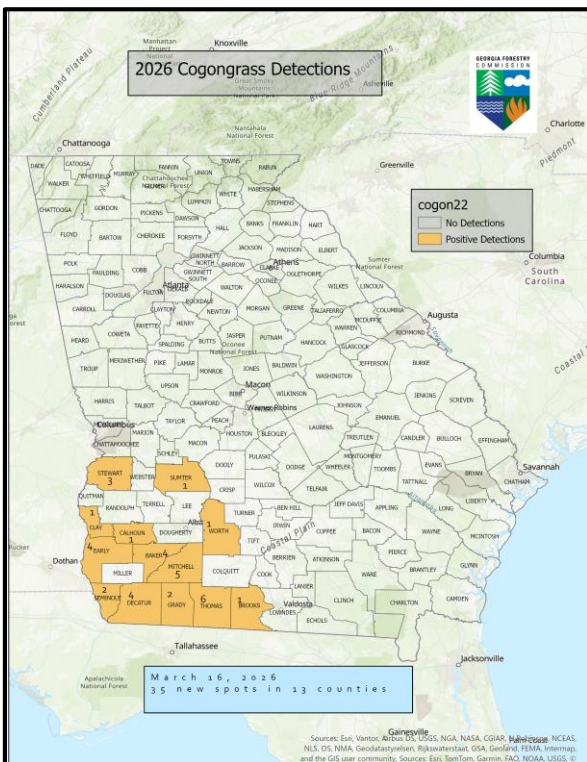
Mark McClure, Forest Health Specialist

2026: Cogongrass Beginning to “Green-Up” with Warming Temperatures.

The Georgia Forestry Commission has begun the 20th year of its campaign to fight the exotic, invasive weed known as cogongrass. Thirty-five new detections have been confirmed between January 1, 2026 and March 16, 2026 in Georgia, bringing the statewide cumulative total to 2,444 cogongrass spots. This number is approximately 25% lower than the same time period in both 2024 and 2025.

Warming soil temperatures are contributing to cogongrass “green-up.” A few sites have displayed the early signs of 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, prescribe burn practitioners, and personnel from the Georgia Forestry Commission, Department of Natural Resources and US Fish and Wildlife Service.



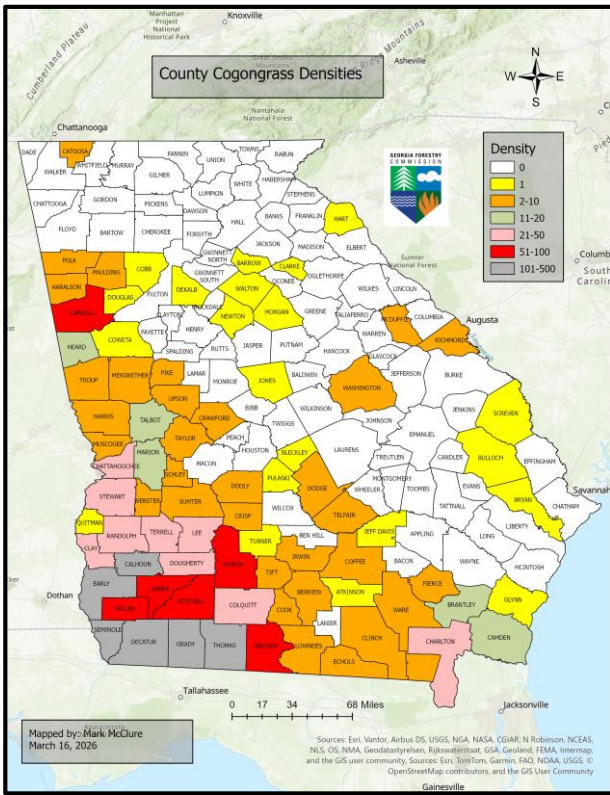
All new detections in 2026 have been located in the southwest region of the state. The map to the left displays the 13 counties reporting 35 new spots as of March 16, 2026. Counties with new detections include: Baker-4; Brooks-1; Calhoun-1; Clay-1; Decatur-4; Early-4; Grady-2; Mitchell-5; Seminole-2; Stewart-3; Sumter-1; Thomas-6; and Worth-1. Spot size this year has ranged from 0.01 acres to 1.20 acres, with an average of 0.18 acres.

Georgia Forestry Commission to recognize Most Cogongrass Detections by an Individual in 2026.

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 2026 calendar year. The fluffy, white flowers appearing in spring between March and May enhance visibility and identification. Continue reporting detections to your local Forestry Commission county office, or directly to your regional Forest Health specialist. Bryan Cottles, Decatur/Seminole Chief Ranger, was the cogongrass detection winner in 2025.

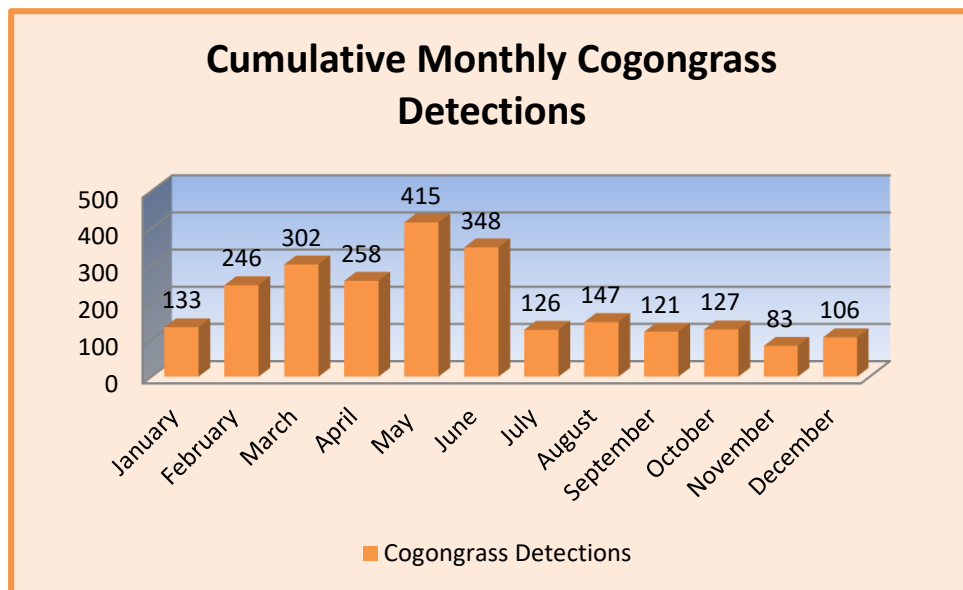
Cumulative Cogongrass Detections per County:

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



Cumulative Cogongrass Detections per Month:

The graph below shows cogongrass detections per month over the past 20 years. Cogongrass is most visible during the flowering season which occurs from late March to early June. The high monthly detections clearly correlate with the flowering season. In addition, numerous detections are made during the prescribe burn season which begins in January and overlaps the cogongrass flowering season. The least number of detections are made during the summer growing season into the fall months.



Physical Characteristics Associated with Identifying Cogongrass:

Spring flowering season is the optimal 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. Mechanical disturbance will alter shape of infestation






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

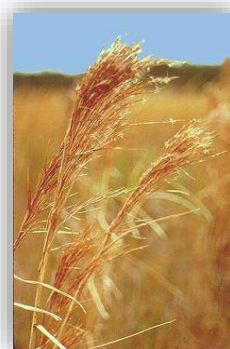
What Other Common Species Resemble Cogongrass?

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 2026 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.cogongrass.org/>

www.bugwood.org

www.gainvasives.org

Forest Health Specialists:

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