

Don't let them get away!

Invasive weeds are most effectively controlled when they and their numbers are small – a little weed control work today will save many dollars and days of work in years to come. Now is the time to take action!

Control that weed!

Prevention is better than cure – healthy, vigorous pasture and native vegetation are less prone to invasion than areas with significant bare patches. **Maintaining healthy vegetation (pastures, native vegetation)** and **reducing the amount of seed** produced by serrated tussock populations are the keys to successful long-term control.

Individual tussock plants or small populations can be easily controlled manually, by **chipping** them out with a mattock. Bare patches left by the removal of serrated tussock will be susceptible to reinvasion, especially if there is an established soil-borne seed bank. This can be prevented by strategic **establishment of vigorous pasture or trees**.

Depending on the time of year and your situation, **chemical control** of serrated tussock can be achieved by spot spraying with glyphosate or fluopropanate-based herbicides. **Always read and follow the label**, wear protective equipment, and avoid off-target damage during chemical control.

Cultivation of large areas containing dense serrated tussock can be a very successful means of controlling this weed. An integrated pasture management plan which involves **cultivation** of the infested area, followed by at least two years of **cropping** prior to the reintroduction of pasture has been shown to be an effective means of controlling large infestations.

Areas where plants have been removed should be **monitored** (serrated tussock seeds may remain viable in the soil for up to 15 years), and any seedlings that emerge controlled (eg by chipping).

The best solution for your site will vary with the type and intensity of infestation, and control will be most effective when a combination of control methods are used. For advice and more details on control methods consult the serrated tussock service sheet at the DPIPWE website (www.dpipwe.tas.gov.au/weeds)

Do the right thing

Weed waste dumped in bushland or local reserves gives pest plants a leg-up into new areas. Do the right thing, and dispose of your weed waste responsibly. Where possible, seeding serrated tussock plants which have been controlled should not be removed from the property – this will reduce the chance of them spreading further afield.

Stock that have grazed areas contaminated with serrated tussock should be spelled for at least seven to ten days in a holding pen, to allow any seeds to pass out of their systems, prior to sale or moving to serrated tussock free areas on your property.

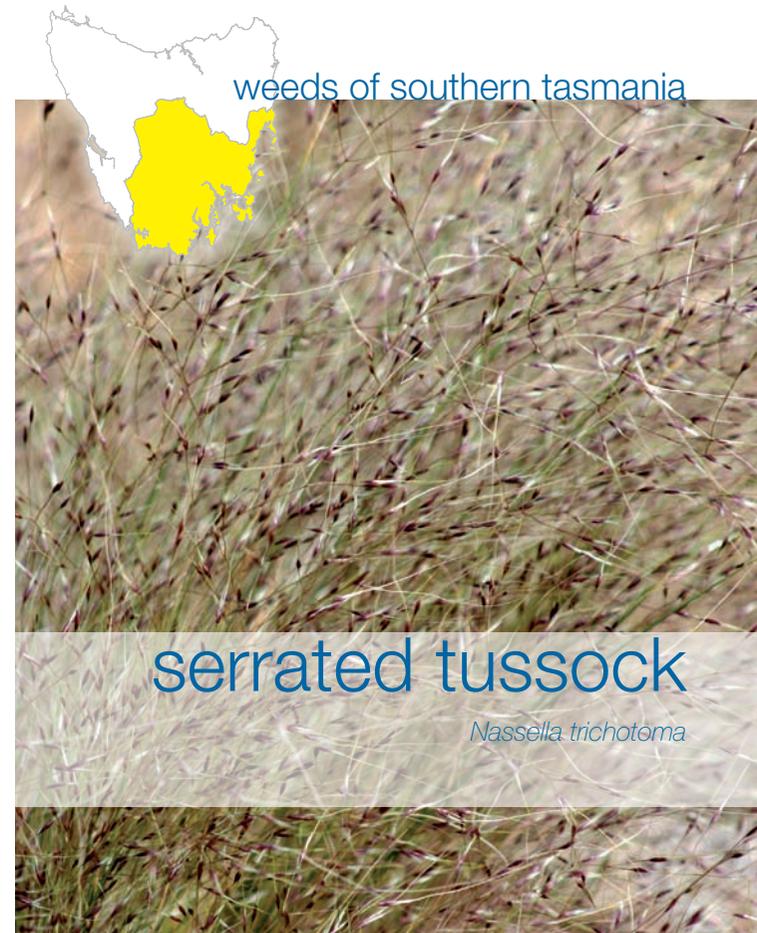
Weeds are easily spread by contaminated machinery and people – check your clothes, shoes, vehicles and other machinery for soil or plant matter that could be carrying weedy plant seeds.

Get informed

Serrated tussock is a serious weed threat for Southern Tasmania. If you believe you have discovered a population of this weed, contact your local Council office or call the DPIPWE on 1300 368 550.



Published by NRM South and the Southern Tasmanian Councils Authority. August 2009



Impacts

Agriculture including native and introduced pastures, roadsides, coastal areas, native grasslands and biodiversity

Current distribution in Southern Tasmania

Widespread: throughout Clarence

Locally abundant: on the East Coast (Little Swanport/ Swansea areas), Southern Beaches (Dunalley, Primrose Sands, Dodges Ferry) and Richmond areas

Isolated populations: in the Southern Midlands



serrated tussock



serrated tussock

Background

Serrated tussock (*Nassella trichotoma*) is an aggressively invasive grass native to South America. It is thought to have accidentally been introduced to Australia around 1900, and was subsequently cultivated as an ornamental – at one stage, it was even considered as a potential pasture species; however it has no nutritional value. It was first noticed in Tasmania in 1965. Serrated tussock is now a Weed of National Significance (WoNS) and is regarded as one of the 20 worst weeds in Australia.

Known as “flying straw” in Argentina, serrated tussock is mainly spread by wind. Flower heads break off whole, and may be carried by the wind or water for many kilometres. It has been estimated that one hectare of serrated tussock infestation can produce **two tonnes** or **500 million seeds** every year.

Serrated tussock is one of Australia’s worst agricultural weeds. It is unpalatable to almost all stock, is capable of reducing pasture productivity by up to 95%, leading to the loss of condition and sometimes death of the stock grazing these areas. In NSW alone, it is estimated to cost **\$40 million annually** in lost production.

Within Tasmania, serrated tussock populations are still quite limited, but there is serious potential for this weed to invade vast areas of our agriculturally productive land and render it essentially useless. Already it has invaded highly threatened native vegetation communities, and has completely overtaken some areas of previously productive pasture.

Get a positive ID

Serrated tussock is a long-lived, tussock-forming grass that grows to around 50cm tall. It has a deep, fibrous root system, and is similar in general appearance to several of our native tussock grasses (*Poa* species).

Seedlings may appear at any time of year, but most germinate in autumn or winter. Young plants are upright and densely tufted with tightly inrolled leaves. The leaves are bright green and the leaf sheaths (which wrap around the base of the leaves) are pale, and more slender and closely packed than those seen in the native tussocks. The leaves are covered in microscopic, upward-pointing barbs which cause them to feel rough to the touch.

Flower heads generally appear on the plant from September to January. These flower heads are very different to those of similar looking native grasses (see photo). The flowering heads are carried on slender stalks slightly longer than the leaves, and are a dark purple colour, creating a distinctive purple haze in larger infestations.

Serrated tussock is easily confused with many of our native tussock species. Leaf bases of serrated tussock are a whitish colour, unlike those of native grasses, which are generally a purple or blue-green.

If you are uncertain as to whether a plant you have found is serrated tussock, collect a sample of it in a sealed bag and contact your local Council office or a DPIW representative.

Weed management – it’s your responsibility

Many people unwittingly harbour pest plants in their gardens – some even actively grow them, knowing nothing of their weedy ways.

Although serrated tussock is not widespread in Tasmania, it may have already made its way onto your land.

This plant is a declared weed under Tasmania’s *Weed Management Act 1999*.

It is your responsibility to control serrated tussock on your land. Failure to remove it from your property could result in legal action. It is also illegal to distribute the plant or its seed in any way, whether as cut flowers, in contaminated feed, on livestock or on dirty equipment.

Weeds are a growing problem.
Act now – Make a plan and make a start!

Images:

1. Serrated tussock in flower
2. Juvenile serrated tussock plant
3. Serrated tussock seeds