



# Cogongrass in Georgia Spring 2016 Update

Mark McClure, Forest Health Specialist

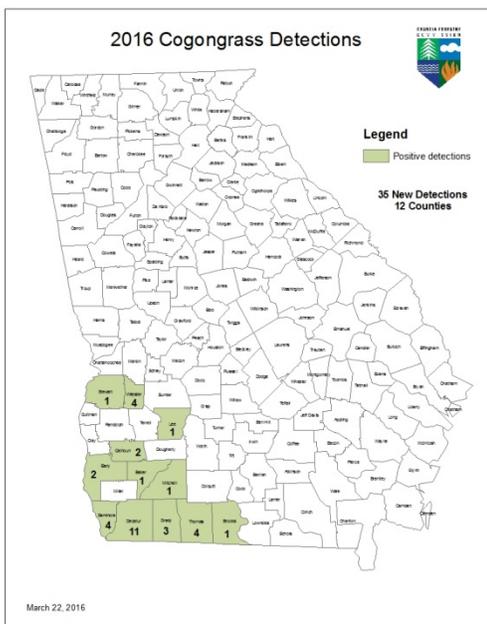
## 2016: Beginning the 10<sup>th</sup> year Cogongrass Campaign.

The Georgia Forestry Commission will reach a 10 year milestone in 2016 in Georgia's battle against the exotic, invasive grass known as cogongrass. There have been 35 new detections confirmed in 2016 bringing the statewide cumulative total to 990 cogongrass spots. This figure is nearly twice the average of 21 new detections reported during this same three month period from 2007-2015.

The above average warmth and rainfall is contributing to early cogongrass "green-up" and flowering. Therefore, landowners are urged to monitor their property, especially pine woodlands, looking carefully for the presence of this exotic, invasive grass.

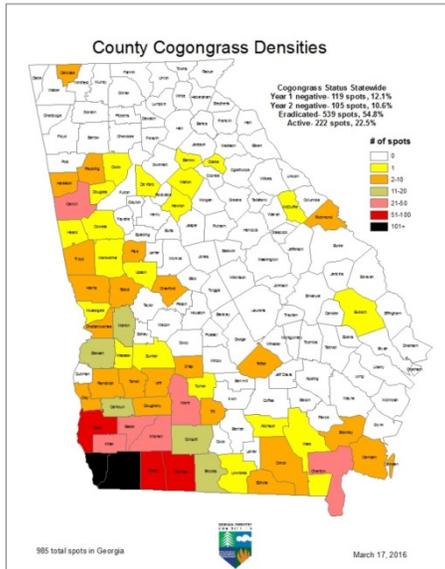
New detections have been reported by landowners, private consulting foresters, loggers, prescribe burning crews, Georgia Forestry Commission, Department of Natural Resources, Natural Resources Conservation Service and UGA County Extension agents.

Presently, all new sites are located in the southwest region of the state. The map to the left displays counties reporting new spots in 2016. Counties with new detections include Decatur-11, Seminole-4, Thomas-4, Webster-4, Grady-3, Calhoun-2, Early-2, Baker-1, Brooks-1, Lee-1, Mitchell-1, and Stewart-1. Spot size this year ranges from 0.03 acres to 2.0 acres with an average of 0.18 acres.



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**Georgia Forestry Commission Forest Health Staff will recognize the 1000<sup>th</sup> cogongrass detection.** The GFC Forest Health staff will recognize the individual that reports the 1000<sup>th</sup> confirmed positive cogongrass detection with a gift. Currently, the statewide count stands at 990. Therefore, individuals are encouraged to be diligent looking for cogongrass over the coming months. Continue reporting detections to your local Forestry Commission county office or directly to your regional Forest Health Specialist.



### Cumulative Cogongrass Detections per county:

The map to the left shows the cogongrass densities across the state of Georgia. The southwest region of the state is Georgia's epicenter with Decatur and Seminole 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. Cogongrass is most difficult to detect during the growing season. However, the most distinguishable feature of cogongrass is its dense, sharp, pointed rhizome root system. Therefore, it is recommended to dig the rhizomes to make a positive identification.



## How do you identify cogongrass flowers?

Cogongrass shoots are beginning to emerge. Therefore, it is time to begin looking for cogongrass in its flowering stage. The flowers are 2-8 inches in length; light, fluffy dandelion-like seeds that are white in color and cylindrical in shape. Flowering time is dependent on the local climate, but is usually present 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:** 2-5' long blades, 1/2-1 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.



**GEORGIA FORESTRY COMMISSION**

# 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	Leaves	Rhizomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ 2-8 inches in length</li><li>■ Silvery white in color</li><li>■ Light fluffy seeds</li><li>■ Blooms March - mid June</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ 2-5 ft. long blades</li><li>■ 1/2-1 inch wide</li><li>■ Off centered white mid-rib</li><li>■ Margins finely serrated</li><li>■ Green-yellowish green in color</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Dense mat</li><li>■ Many sharp points</li><li>■ Strongly segmented</li><li>■ Covered in flaky scales</li><li>■ Bright white under scales</li></ul>

**Growing Season**      **Dormant Season**

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

[www.gatrees.org](http://www.gatrees.org)      [www.cogongrass.org](http://www.cogongrass.org)

## What other common grass 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.

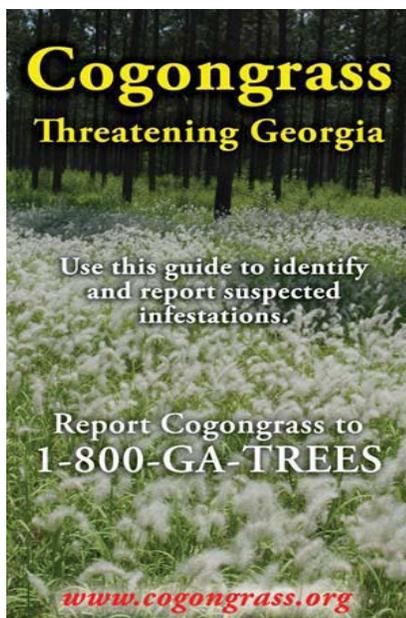


**Silver Beardgrass:** Looks very similar but often somewhat branched and blooms later in the year (June-August). Leaves are not serrated and arise from an apparent stem. The midrib is not as apparent. The plant base has a strongly bunched appearance, with apparent stems. Root system is fibrous, lacking 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 serrate. The plant base is rounded, but very thick in comparison to cogongrass. The plant does not appear bunched. The rhizomes system is not as extensive. Rhizomes lack scaly coverings. The information above was taken from the brochure entitled "Field Guide to the Identification of Cogongrass". Detailed descriptions along with color photo images are shown in the brochure.



**Cogongrass identification brochure and pocket ID available from the Georgia Forestry Commission.** Contact your local Forestry Commission Office or Regional Forest Health Specialist to obtain copies of these publications.



**How Do I Report Cogongrass?** To report a potential new cogongrass detection, contact your local Georgia Forestry Commission (GFC) office or your Regional Forest Health Specialist. The GFC will continue spraying cogongrass in 2016 at no charge to the landowner. Landowner's 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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