Fire risk report for *Cenchrus polystachios*

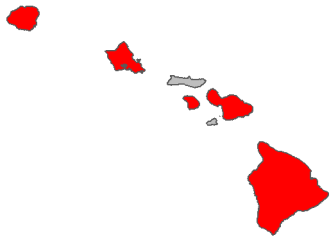
Full Species Name
Cenchrus polystachios (L.) Morrone

Family: Poaceae

Common names:
feathery pennisetum
blue buffelgrass

Synonyms:
Penisetum polystachion

Known occurrences (as of 2020)



Year first documented as naturalized in Hawai'i: 1863

This species has not yet been ranked by the Hawai'i Weed Risk Assessment program as of 2020.

View photos on Starr Environmental

View on Wikipedia

View occurrences on iNaturalist

View at Plants of Hawaii

View photos on Flickr

0	.5	1
Lowest risk	⇔	Highest risk

This species is likely a **high** fire risk in Hawai'i with a fire risk score of **0.63**.

This species was ranked by 49 managers on a scale of 'no risk', 'low risk', 'medium risk', or 'high risk'. The numerical score ranges from 0 to 1 with higher scores indicating more managers considered it a higher risk. A score of > .31 indicates high risk.

Summary of Fire ecology	
Native habitat fire proneness	No Data
Fire promoting plant in its native range	No
Fire promoting plant in its introduced range*	Yes
Regenerates after fire	Yes
Promoted by fire	Yes
Reported flammable*	High
Relative is flammable*	Yes

*These values were used by the model to predict fire risk

Detailed summary of Fire Ecology

Native habitat fire proneness (In any part of the plant's native range is its habitat described as fire prone due to natural or human caused fires?)	No Data	
Fire promoting plant in its native range (Does the species act as a major fuel source, increase fire severity, frequency, or modify fuel bed characteristics within its native range?)	No	
Fire promoting plant in its introduced range (Same as Fire Promoting Native but within the species introduced range)	Yes	"Andropogon gayanus and P. polystachion have a significant impact on fire regimes by increasing fuel loads and hence fire intensities (Rossiter et al. 2003, Douglas et al. https://ris.cdu.edu.au/ws/portalfiles/portal/23680748/Thesis_CDU_8310_RossiterRachors_N.pdf 2004)" Rossiter-Rachor, N. (2009). Effects of Andropogon gayanus (gamba grass) invasion on ecosystem nitrogen dynamics in an Australian tropical savanna. Iron Mountain. --- "It becomes dominant in cleared forests and spreads quickly after fires, forming dense tussocks that may cover large areas." http://www.hear.org/pier/species/cenchrus_polystachios.htm
Regenerates after fire (Does the plant regrow after fire by any means? This includes resprouters, reseeders, and recruiters which dispersed into the area within approximately one year post fire)	Yes	"It quickly covers the ashes of a fire and forms a dense tussock grassland preventing erosion[375, 418]. As a fire disclimax, Cenchrus polystachios grassland invades a good deal of the mountainous land in Thailand and Fiji[375]." https://tropical.theferns.info/viewtropical.php?id=Cenchrus+polystachios Tropical Plants Database, Ken Fern. tropical.theferns.info. 2020-10-03.

Promoted by fire (Does the plant increase in abundance after a fire?)	Yes	"It quickly covers the ashes of a fire and forms a dense tussock grassland preventing erosion[375, 418]. As a fire disclimax, Cenchrus polystachios grassland invades a good deal of the mountainous land in Thailand and Fiji[375]." https://tropical.theferns.info/viewtropical.php?id=Cenchrus+polystachios Tropical Plants Database, Ken Fern. tropical.theferns.info. 2020-10-03.
Reported flammable (Is the species described as being flammable, being a major wildfire fuel, or high fire risk?)	High	"In Australia, "provides fuel for extremely hot, late season fires and may have altered natural fire regimes" (Smith, 1995, cited in Csurhes & Edwards, 1998; p. 185" http://www.hear.org/pier/species/cenchrus_polystachios.htm --- "Data from three sites in Litchfield National Park show that mission grass invasion results in fuel loads five times larger than in uninvaded sites. The grass remains erect during the dry season, resulting in a large fuel load that can carry flames into the canopies of savanna trees." https://www.cabi.org/ISC/FullTextPDF/2005/20053008405.pdf Douglas, M. M., Setterfield, S. A., Rossiter, N., Barratt, J., & Hutley, L. B. (2004, September). Effects of mission grass (Pennisetum polystachion (L.) Schult.) invasion on fuel loads and nitrogen availability in a northern Australia tropical savanna. In Proceedings of the 14th Australian Weeds Conference'.(Eds BM Sindel and SB Johnson.) pp (pp. 179-181).
Relative is flammable (Does a plant in the same genus meet the Reported Flammable criteria?)	Yes	"Fuels: Buffelgrass fine fuel loads are generally much higher than fine fuel loads from native plants in desert environments. Thus, fires in buffelgrass stands may have longer flame lengths, greater rates of spread, and higher temperatures than fires in native desert vegetation, and cause high mortality in native flora and fauna [43]. Buffelgrass stands burn ""very hot"" [24] and can burn when green [42,129]. In the Sonoran Desert, buffelgrass-fueled fires can reach temperatures so hot that the soil is scorched and the bedrock cracked [42]. Headfires in buffelgrass stands can reach temperatures of 1,090 to 1,300 °F (585-700 °C) [27,103]. Esque and others [42] state that buffelgrass grows into an ""almost-woody subshrub"", accumulating flammable material over several years, ""in effect unlinking fire frequency from annual climatic variability and increasing the fire intensity""."

		https://www.fs.fed.us/database/feis/plants/graminoid/pencil/all.html#FIRE%20ECOLOGY"

Text in quotes are direct quotes from the source
Text in square brackets was added by the assessor to clarify something or to summarize from a figure.
Text preceded by a "#" is comment from the assessor

The data presented were assembled from literature and database searches for each species using as much data as could be collected regarding the plant's fire ecology under natural conditions. Searches aimed to be exhaustive and consist of as much data as could be located in 2020. Our machine learning algorithm was trained on 49 species of plants which had their fire risk ranked by 49 managers in Hawai'i in November 2020. The model used a conditional random forest regression algorithm to predict scores for each species using the manager score as the response variable and the fire ecology traits of each plant as the predictor variables to generate a fire risk score. This trained model was then used to predict the fire risk for all species which were not ranked by managers. The model was calibrated such that it is 90% accurate at predicting high fire risk plants and 79% accurate at predicting low fire risk plants. This research and the resulting fire risk model has been published in the journal Biological Invasions by Kevin Faccenda and Curt Daehler (both at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa).

Note that the analysis doesn't account for a plant species' spatial distribution, population density, or distinct climate and ecosystem conditions (which can also influence fire risk). The fire risk of these species are mostly under "worst case" environmental conditions where the climate is dry enough to maintain fire, but wet enough to allow for plant growth and fuel accumulation. The fire risk ranking should not be taken as a stand-alone risk metric in prioritizing weed control efforts. Rather, this information may also be useful for determining if a newly discovered species poses a potential fire threat in wildland areas.

More general information on the weed risks and ecology of non-native plants in Hawai'i is available from the Hawai'i Invasive Species Committee's Weed Risk Assessment database.

View more fact sheets at https://www.pacificfireexchange.org/weed-fire-risk-assessments

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Fact sheet prepared by Kevin Faccenda (faccenda@hawaii.edu) in November 2021. Data were prepared by Kevin Faccenda in 2020.

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