

Impacts: Johnson grass is one of the 10 most noxious weeds in the world. It reproduces quickly, and its seeds can stay viable for up to 20 years, making it difficult to control. Rapid growth also lets it out-compete native grasses and plants that provide food and shelter for wildlife. Dense stands become a monoculture, altering the diversity of an area.



***It is illegal to propagate, sell or transport this plant within the Commonwealth.**

Suspected Means of Introduction: Johnson grass was introduced by a governor of South Carolina, John Means, in the 1800's. Its name was later changed from Means grass to Johnson grass after a Colonel Johnson who grew it for 40 years.

BioBullies

Johnson Grass

Sorghum halepense



Description: Johnson grass is a perennial grass that grows quickly through rhizomes. It is coarse, with reddish to dark-purplish panicles, and stands up to 8 feet tall. The grass blades are long, skinny, (1 inch wide and up to 2 feet long) and very smooth. The center vein of the blade is whitish, making a distinct line down the middle. Johnson grass resembles corn in a number of ways. The seed heads look very similar and are purplish and hairy. To distinguish it from corn, look at the rhizomes, which are white to pinkish on new forming plants and a beige color on more mature plants.

Native Range:

Johnson grass is native to the Mediterranean

Resources for Identification and Control of Johnson Grass

Weed of the Week - USDA Forest Service

Plant Profile Database - USDA

Invasive.org
University of GA, US Forest Service, USDA APHIS

Noxious Weed Fact Sheet
PA Dept. of Agriculture

Global Invasive Species Team - The Nature Conservancy



Johnson Grass

Sorghum halepense



Habitat: Johnson grass is found in many areas, including disturbed sites, roadsides, fields, and crops (usually corn). It grows best on fertile, well-drained soils in warm temperatures.

Biology: Johnson grass reproduces by seeds, which stay viable for up to 20 years. Rhizomes also help it to reproduce quickly and in large areas up to 200ft across.

Control Methods: In the summer grass can be controlled by repeated tilling every few weeks. Rhizomes of the plant can also freeze out during the winter, which helps control infestations in agricultural fields because tilling early in the season, for this encourages rhizome growth and new shoots from the fragments. You can also use herbicides. Grazing animals, such as goats and hogs, can also help in Johnson grass control.