



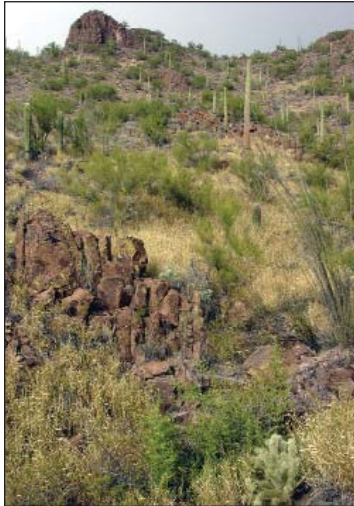
Invaders

of the
Sonoran Desert Region
a project of the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum

Invasive Species Field ID



buffelgrass
zacate buffel
Pennisetum ciliare



Known Distribution

- **General**
Common in Texas and Arizona and south into Coahuila, Chihuahua, Sonora, and Baja California Sur. Rare in New Mexico and California.
- **Arizona**
Widespread in Phoenix and Tucson areas in Maricopa, Pima, and Pinal counties. Less common in Cochise, Santa Cruz, and Yuma counties.

Habitat

- **Vegetation type**
Most common in paloverde-saguaro desertscrub in the Arizona Upland Sonoran Desert. Less common in Lower Colorado River Valley desertscrub, desert grassland, and chaparral.
- **Landforms**
Most common in disturbed roadsides along major highways. Less common along dirt roads. Also found on rocky bajadas and steep slopes, especially south- and east-facing slopes.
- **Elevation**
250 to 4150 ft.



buffelgrass



Identification

- **A shrubby grass** forming broad clumps from 1 to 1.5 ft. tall and up to 3 ft. across. Leaf blades grow from bases in young plants and plants re-sprouting from fire (bunchgrasses).
- **Stems** branch profusely, producing new leaves and seed spikes at above-ground nodes. **①** Only coarse grass in AZ that branches.
- **Leaves** broad, changing from green to light yellowish tan to whitish tan through season.
- **Seed spikes** **②** 1.5 to 5 in. long, fat, round in cross section, brown to purplish, occasionally blond. Crowded with dense bristly fruit that fall off when ripe. Seeds concealed within a hairy structure.



Seasonality

- **Flowers and fruits** rapidly after rains, primarily in the warm season (July-September) but also in other seasons.

Similar Species

- Large individuals of several large perennial grasses with branched stems difficult to separate from buffelgrass in dried condition without seed spikes.
- **Plains bristlegrass** (*Setaria macrostachya*) **③** An erect bunchgrass with more slender seed spikes and individual plump oval seeds visible.
- **Arizona cottontop** (*Digitaria californica*) A moderately dense perennial bunchgrass with knotty, felty base with seed spikes slender with flattened, oval seeds with white silky hairs.
- **Tanglehead** (*Heteropogon contortus*) A very erect perennial bunchgrass with dark brown seeds with long tangled awns and orange-bronze leaf blades (when dry).

