

Replacing Pampas Grass in Your Garden

Pampas grass tempts gardeners with its fast growth and dramatic, large-scaled presence in the garden. Here is a short list of plants that have the scale and vertical heft of pampas grass that might do as substitutes:

- *Stipa gigantea*: one of the tallest, most graceful grasses with showy plumes in summer;
- Phormiums (New Zealand Flax): The larger forms are dramatic and come in various colors;
- Bamboos: They provide a vertical element and their tendency to spread can be controlled;
- *Miscanthus 'Giganteus'* (giant miscanthus); spreading upright to 8 – 12 ft. late summer blooms;
- *Miscanthus transmorrisonensis* (evergreen miscanthus): 4 ft. leaves with 4-6 ft. flowering stems;

A companion plant and look-alike, *Cortaderia selloana*, comes in various forms and is sometimes found in nurseries. While not as invasive as *Cortaderia jubata*, *C. selloana* is, indeed invasive and should also be controlled in coastal communities.

Do not put Pampas grass in your green waste container.

Our Supporters

The West Marin Pampas Grass Control Program has received financial support from:

- Marin Community Foundation,
- Supervisor Steve Kinsey (Marin County)
- Inverness Association
- Inverness Garden Club
- Sonoma/Marin Weed Management Area
- Bear Valley Property Owners Association
- West Marin residents.

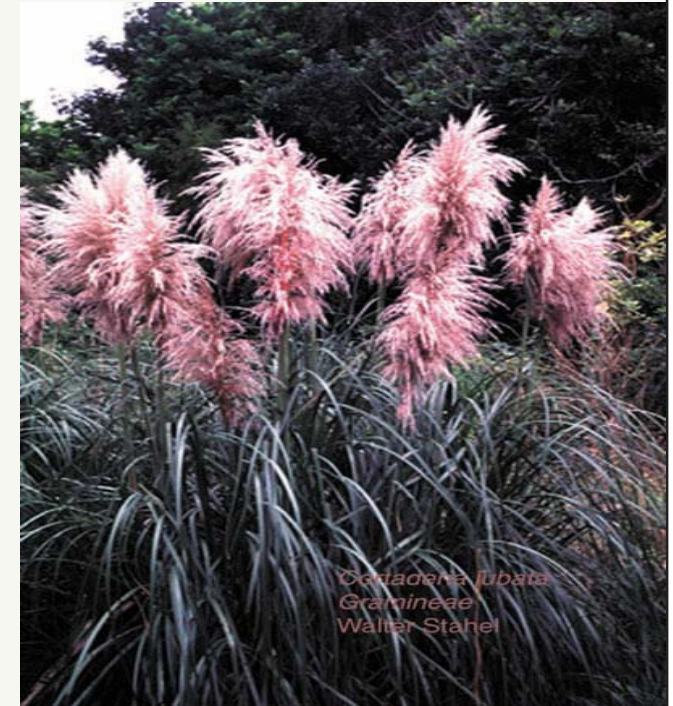
Other, non-financial, supporters include:

- Tomales Bay Watershed Council
- Environmental Action Committee of West Marin
- Point Reyes Commons



For More Information
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West Marin's PAMPAS GRASS CONTROL PROGRAM



Cortaderia jubata
Gramineae
Walter Stehel

The Inverness Association has adopted a 2-year program to control pampas grass (*Cortaderia jubata*) along Sir Francis Drake Boulevard in Inverness, using safe, mechanical methods (no herbicides). This pamphlet is part of our outreach program to inform local residents about the program and about ways to safely remove this invasive plant from public and private property in West Marin.

Where did Pampas Grass Come From?

A perennial grass native to Argentina and the Andes, it was initially introduced into California for forage, wind breaks and soil stabilizers, and also by the nursery trade for landscaping. The entire coast of California is now infected with pampas grass, which continues to spread rapidly. Once it reaches maturity it becomes a fire hazard and is very difficult to remove.

What is Pampas Grass (Cortaderia jubata)?

These large, handsome plants grow to 6 feet in diameter and height, each with spikes up to 12 feet, capped by striking fluffy, pale plumes in late summer. Its long, frond-like dark green leaves, about an inch wide, are serrated and sharp, making it hazardous to work around these plants. Typically, pampas grass grows in groups, probably seeded from a local "mother" plant. Since each plume produces millions of seeds that can be carried by winds up to 20 miles, Pampas grass spreads quickly. It easily establishes itself in disturbed, open earth, which is why it is so common along the embankments of our coastal roadways. Once firmly established, it will completely choke out native and other vegetation and provides neither food nor cover for most wild life.

The entire coast of California is now infected with pampas grass, which continues to spread rapidly. Once it reaches maturity, it is very difficult to remove. The Point Reyes National Seashore has been successful in controlling pampas grass.

Between Inverness Park and Camino del Mar, we have identified about 20 different patches infected with pampas grass on the embankment above Sir Francis Drake Blvd, some of them 25 feet or more above the roadway. Treating them is exceedingly difficult because of the steepness of the embankment, the toughness of the grass fronds and stalks, and the nearness of the roadway. Inverness Garden Service is contracted to do this tough job.



How to Treat Pampas Grass in Your Garden

You can either use the mechanical methods described at right, or use an herbicide such as Round Up. Use herbicide very carefully. We recommend cutting back the fronds and then applying herbicide directly to the stumps with a paint brush (wear gloves), being careful not to let the herbicide touch other vegetation or spill on the ground. Herbicide works best during the

growing season, so apply in warm weather. A second application may be necessary if new shoots appear. Killing pampas grass with herbicide is cheap, easy and effective. Always be cautious in handling the flowering plumes. Contain them to prevent the seeds from spreading the plant.

How we Plan to Treat Pampas Grass on Sir Francis Drake Boulevard

In October, 2009, Inverness Garden Service crews cut back and removed the blooming pampas grass plumes in order to prevent the millions of seeds in each plume from spreading the plant to new areas. In August and September of 2010, the work crews will physically remove smaller plants, and treat large, mature plants carefully. This requires cutting back all the green fronds and stalks to the base of the plant and temporarily encasing the plant with black plastic fabric. The fabric will be secured with a wire ring and its edges buried. This treatment is somewhat experimental (most pampas grass removal has been done with herbicides), but is the most "advanced" non-herbicide technique yet available.

Mature pampas grass plants have strong, deep root systems. Physically pulling them out (very difficult) would leave large holes and open spaces, ripe for erosion at the next rain.