

Is it Buffelgrass?



Buffelgrass is an invasive plant that can out-compete our native grasses and wildflowers. Additionally, it can sustain a fire in our naturally fire-resistant desert. It burns very hot, hot enough to kill saguaro and other native plants.

Grasses are easiest to identify when seedheads are present. Without the seedheads, buffelgrass looks like many other grasses. Though established plants can sometimes bloom in spring, you usually see buffelgrass seedheads starting in September and continuing until November or December. Once the seeds fall, you may be able to identify the grass by the rough stem left behind.

To identify buffelgrass:

- Look for seeds held in a "fox tail" or "bottle brush". A buffelgrass seedhead is a single long stem with seeds attached all around, bringing to mind a fox's tail or a narrow brush for bottles. Critical point is that each collection of seeds has only one, central stem. A grass with seedheads of several stems clustered together is automatically NOT buffelgrass.



Another grass with similar seedheads is fountain grass. This grass is also invasive but has much longer fox tails (5-6" or more rather than the 3-4" typical of buffelgrass) and the seeds are pale.

- Look for seedheads that appear purplish due to purple "hairs". The purple of the fox tail will fade with age but the hairs on the seeds often retain the color.



- Look for hairs on the seeds, not on the stem. After the seeds fall off, the stem will be rough but hairless. To test this, take off a few seeds. If there are no hairs on the seeds, it is NOT buffelgrass.

- Look for a rough but hairless stem that used to hold the seeds. If the stem is hairy, it is automatically NOT buffelgrass.



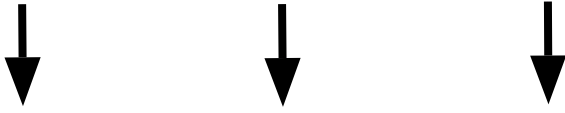
Buffelgrass leaves are about 3/8" wide and turn yellowish in November/December (grasses with very fine, narrow leaves are NOT buffelgrass). Many native, desirable grasses also have wide leaves and become yellowish in fall/winter. If you spot a grass with yellowing leaves, it is a signal to check for buffelgrass, but don't assume a plant is buffelgrass without using the ID characteristics listed above.

Buffelgrass Look-A-Likes in Academy Village

Two grasses in Academy Village can be mistaken for buffelgrass. All three grasses produce seed heads in fall. Fortunately, the seed heads and the stalks that remain after the seeds have fallen make it easy to differentiate the three species.

BUFFELGRASS

Seeds are held on a single stalk and form a "foxtail" or "bottlebrush". The seeds are very hairy and the hairs have a strong red-purple color. After the seeds fall, the single stalk is rough and zig-zagged.



CANE BEARDGRASS

Seeds in each seed head are held on multiple, short stalks. The seeds are distinctly white. When the seeds fall, the whole stalk disintegrates, leaving a very smooth stem below. Arrow indicates where seeds were attached



BRISTLEGRASS

Seeds are held on a single stalk. The seeds are small, smooth, and hairless. Bristles are left on the seed stalk after the seeds fall. This grass is often found growing in the shade of trees.

