

GREEN GONE BAD

Featured Ornamental Plant: *Eragrostis curvula*

Some exotic ornamental plants behave badly when they escape from the place they are planted. Infestations of these plants have negative impacts on natural environments. One of these plants is *Eragrostis curvula*; common name: Weeping Love Grass.

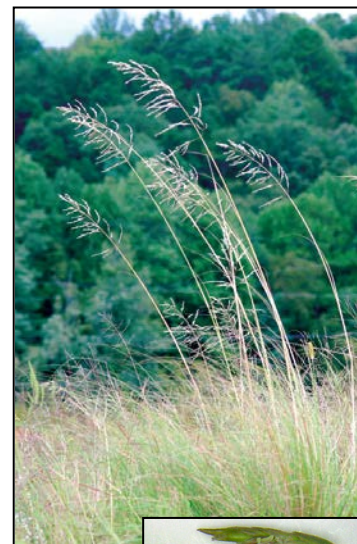


Eragrostis curvula was imported to this country in 1927 by the U.S. Department of Agriculture from South Africa and later from Tanzania for erosion control and for forage. Being very drought tolerant, it grows well in hot, dry locations in full sun and in most soils if they are well drained. It thrives in sandy soils and is now commonly seen on highway embankments all over the South where it is a perennial.

Eragrostis curvula is a member of the grass family (Poaceae) with a large fibrous root system. It is a clump forming grass which grows to a height of 2 to 6 feet. The inflorescence is a lax, open panicle, commonly 8 to 10 inches long. It is

characterized by erect, stiff, slender stems with dark green, very narrow arching narrow foliage. *Eragrostis curvula* is also known as Boer lovegrass, curved lovegrass, and Catalina lovegrass.

Eragrostis curvula has spread across the entire southern portion of the United States and northward as far as Pennsylvania and New Jersey where it is still spreading by self seeding. It can produce huge quantities of small-sized seed that accumulate in the soil seed bank. Clumps can also increase by basal shoots. Seed is spread by wind, water, animals, contaminated equipment and vehicles. It is very persistent and long lived. The greatest contributor to its spread, however, has been its intentional use along highway embankments. With just a few visits over time, new germination and spread of weeping lovegrass can be observed in natural areas that are adjacent to planted or infested areas. It is now federally listed as a noxious weed in Arizona and portions of New Mexico.



Because of its drought tolerance and the ease with which seed-based propagation occurs, *Eragrostis curvula* has become a pest throughout its range. It is known to crowd out other native grasses as a result of its aggressive nature and its characteristic rapid early growth. Rapid vegetative growth creates an early ground cover choking out other plants. It offers no benefits to wildlife and its uses, other than ornamental, are food for livestock and erosion control. Infestations are detrimental to wildlife, especially ground-nesting and foraging birds due to thick impenetrable thatch and reduced food resources.



It may not be widely known among horticulturalists and landscapers that this plant can be harmful to natural habitats. Please consider removing this species from your inventory. Native grasses great for erosion control and for ornamental use include *Eragrostis spectabilis* (Purple Lovegrass), *Muhlenbergia capillaris* (Sweetgrass or Muhly Grass), *Eragrostis elliottii* (Sand Lovegrass or Blue Eros), *Sorghastrum nutans* (Indiangrass), *Panicum virgatum* (Switchgrass), and *Spartina bakeri* (Sand Cordgrass). Additional natives used for erosion control are *Dichanthelium clandestinum* (Deer Tongue Panic Grass), and *Elymus virginica* or *Elymus canadensis* (Virginia or Canada Wild Rye). Several native grass species such as *Tripsacum dactyloides* (Eastern Gama Grass), Switchgrass and *Andropogon gerardii* (Big Bluestem) are used as forage.

Visit <http://www.invasive.org/browse/subinfo.cfm?sub=6989>, http://wiki.bugwood.org/Archive:IPSF/Eragrostis_curvula or <http://www.naisn.org/profile.html?sub=6989> for more details.

References: Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, Virginia Native Plant Society, USDA Forest Service, invasive.org, wiki.bugwood.org

See also: <http://www.se-eppc.org/southcarolina/> and <http://www.se-eppc.org/>

