

INVASIVE PLANT SPECIES OF VIRGINIA

SPECIES COMMON NAME:

Silvergrass

SCIENTIFIC NAME:

Miscanthus sinensis

Threat

Silvergrass (*Miscanthus sinensis*), also called eulalia or maidengrass, is a highly popular landscaping grass with over 100 cultivars, valued for its rapid growth and adaptability. However, these same traits make it an aggressive invasive species. It was introduced into North America in the late 1800s and found escaping into the wild by 1913. While silvergrass can form dense clumps and outcompete native species, arguably the biggest threat is its fire risk. Silvergrass is highly flammable and known to increase fire severity and frequency. Including this plant in landscaping increases fire risk in urban environments, and escaped populations in natural areas raise wildfire risk. Silvergrass reproduces through both wind-dispersed seed and rhizomes, allowing it to colonize areas both near and far.

NATIVE ALTERNATIVES

Multiple native grasses can serve as suitable replacements for silvergrass while providing ecological benefits. One great — though slightly shorter — alternative is the native **little bluestem** (*Schizachyrium scoparium*), which is also a clumping grass with similarly colored foliage in the dormant season. The grass can reach heights of about 6 feet. If little bluestem isn't tall enough, consider **big bluestem**



Indiangrass

(*Andropogon gerardii*), another clumping grass that can grow up to about 9 feet tall. Big bluestem has attractive blue-green leaves and an interesting three-branched seed head. Other native options include **silver plume grass** (*Erianthus alopecuroides*) and **Indiangrass** (*Sorghastrum nutans*).



Report Sightings

If you believe you have found a wild occurrence of silvergrass, you can assist in conservation efforts by reporting your finding. Collect complete location information including coordinates if possible. Take clear photos of the plant from a distance and up close. Detailed images of leaves, flowers, and seed heads are particularly helpful. Reports can be emailed directly to invasive.species@dcr.virginia.gov or reported online through the Early Detection and Distribution Mapping System (EDDMapS). Reports can also be made on a smartphone using the free EDDMapS or iNaturalist apps.

Description

Silvergrass is a perennial clumping grass that can reach heights upwards of 10 feet. Leaves are narrow, long and arching, and branch alternately off of a central stem. Leaf blades are green with a white midvein and coarse leaf edges. Certain cultivars have variegated foliage that may persist in escaped populations. Silvergrass flowers in late summer and fall, producing large feathery plumes up to 15 inches long. Plumes develop on the terminal end of the stem and may be white, silver or pink. Seeds are tan or brown. In winter, the grass dries and remains standing, retaining seed heads.



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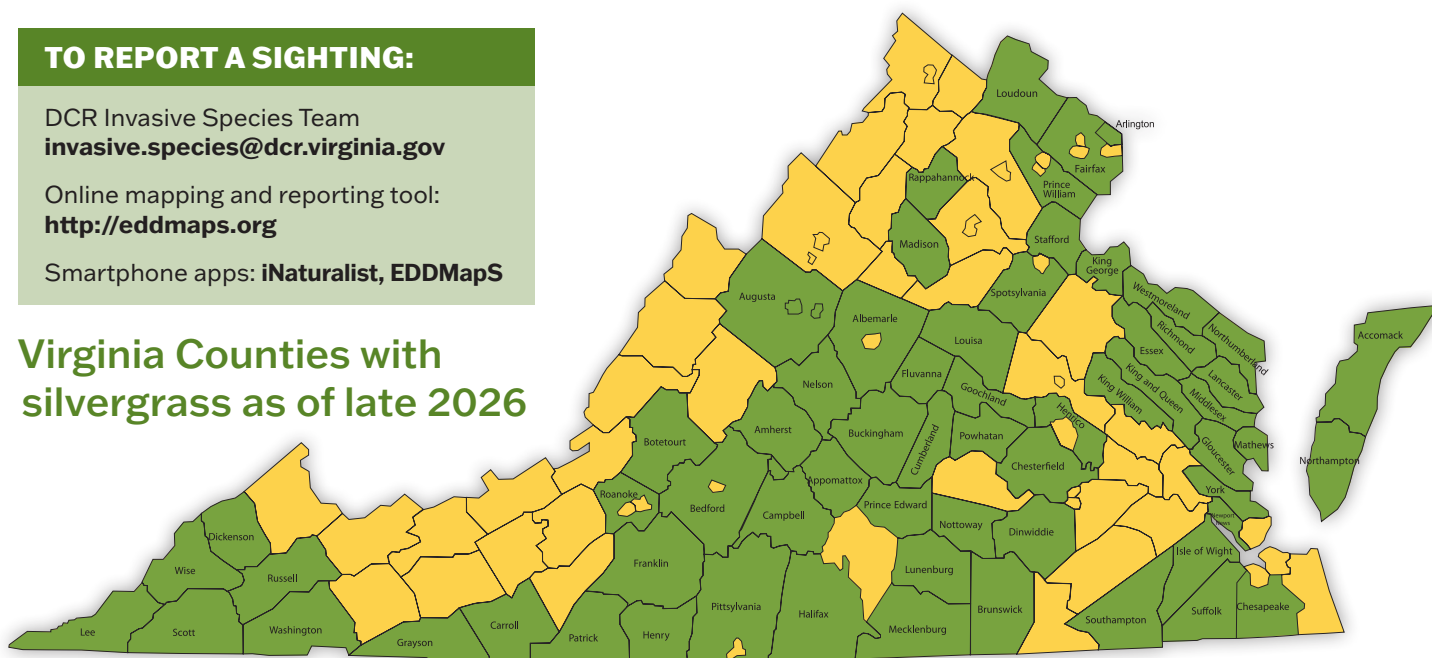
TO REPORT A SIGHTING:

DCR Invasive Species Team
invasive.species@dcr.virginia.gov

Online mapping and reporting tool:
<http://eddmappings.org>

Smartphone apps: iNaturalist, EDDMapS

Virginia Counties with silvergrass as of late 2026



Distribution

Silvergrass has escaped into all regions of the state, and many large invasive populations have become established. As of 2026, documented occurrences of silvergrass existed in 63 counties statewide. Highly disturbed areas like roadsides and railroads commonly host silvergrass populations, but it can also invade forests, forest edges, clearings and old fields. The plant is also a common invader after burns. Silvergrass prefers sun and moist soils, but is shade, drought and cold tolerant.

Control

Due to its rhizomatic growth, silvergrass can be difficult to fully eradicate from an area using manual methods. If you attempt to remove silvergrass manually, remove all roots and fragments and ensure responsible disposal. Plan to monitor the area long-term for any resprouts from roots that may have been missed. Several herbicides are effective against silvergrass. For more information on chemical control methods, contact your local cooperative extension agent or area forester. Mowing can be utilized to limit plant growth, but it typically will not provide control of populations. Do not mow when seed heads are present to prevent further spread. Mowing can be highly effective when combined with herbicide treatments. In areas where silvergrass cannot be removed, cutting and disposing of the seed heads can limit further spread, although the plants may still spread locally via rhizomes.

Photo credits:

John Ruter, University of Georgia, Bugwood.org *Miscanthus sinensis*
Leslie J. Mehrhoff, University of Connecticut, Bugwood.org *Miscanthus sinensis*
Gary P. Fleming *Miscanthus sinensis*, *Sorghastrum nutans*

SOURCES

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