



SEPTEMBER 2008

Ehrharta erecta **PANIC VELDT GRASS**

Ehrharta is an aggressive, rapid seeding, perennial grass species, which thrives, in a wide variety of soil and weather conditions.

DESCRIPTION

Ehrharta can grow to 60 cm tall.

- **Leaves** are 5-20 cm long, 2-10 mm wide, mid to dark green. The edges are soft and can be crinkled toward the base. There is a prominent mid-vein on the underside of the leaf.
- **Seed stems** are 10-80 cm long and grow at any time during the year. The stem can be upright or curved, often branched near the base and sometimes tinged red.
- **Seeds** are 3 mm long and oval. They range from immature green to a bleached, dry appearance. Viability approaches 100%.
- **Roots** are fibrous and shallow. Rhizomes are short and slender. *Ehrharta* reproduces by seed and rhizomes. Most dispersal is by seed spread by water, wind, and birds. Rhizomes can be dispersed in garden refuse and soil removal. *Ehrharta* is sometimes found in plant nursery pots.

Effects on the environment

As an aggressive, perennial plant almost constantly in seed, *Ehrharta* develops large populations quickly. The rapid germination period seriously restricts the growth and regeneration of indigenous plants and can eventually eliminate small native species.

HABITAT

Ehrharta occurs in grassy woodlands, forests and heathland and grows vigorously in open areas. It is particularly tolerant of sheltered, moderately shaded conditions with light, well-drained soil. In these situations, plants produce seed continually throughout the year. In dry locations growth slows during hot weather. *Ehrharta* frequently colonises roadsides and disturbed soils associated with construction work.



Ehrharta plant and seed head.
Source: Sutherland Shire Council

ORIGIN AND DISTRIBUTION

Ehrharta originated in Southern Africa but the date of its introduction to Australia is unknown. *Ehrharta* occupies a wide distribution in Australia including large infestations in NSW, Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia and the ACT. There are also some recorded occurrences in Queensland and Western Australia.

DECLARATION

Ehrharta is an environmental weed in Sutherland Shire. It is important that environmental weeds are destroyed, as they can affect human health, or can be invasive in the natural environment killing the native flora and reducing the natural biodiversity. Native animals may also be affected due to the loss of their natural habitat.

Control

Ehrharta plants are easy to dig or pull out, as root system is shallow. It is essential the entire rhizome is removed or regrowth will occur. Plants should be bagged and disposed of safely.

Seed in the ground will remain viable for approximately 12 months. Seedlings and regrowth can be expected within 4-6 weeks of any control activity. A period of 1-2 years of concentrated follow-up should be anticipated to achieve effective

control in an area.

Fire does not usually kill the plants. They flower and seed within weeks of burning and infestation can occur with dramatic speed.

Plants can be sprayed with non-selective or grass-selective herbicide. The spray will kill the plant but seed remains unaffected. Again, long-term follow-up will be required.



Ehrharta infestation on the edge of a fire trail.
Source: Sutherland Shire Council

For further information contact
Bushcare or Greenweb Units
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Sutherland Shire
COUNCIL

