

## Itch grass (458)

### Summary

- Widespread. Asia, Africa, North, South and Central America, Caribbean, Oceania. In Australia, Fiji, PNG, Solomon Islands.
- Aggressive grass of open, well-drained sites, along roads, railways, but also wet places, including shallow water. Invasive in soybean, corn, cotton, peanut, upland rice, sugarcane. Plants produce many thousands of seeds, and thrive under a range of environmental conditions. Alternative host for maize viruses (*Maize mosaic nucleorhabdovirus*; **see Fact Sheet no. 074**). Hairs damage skin.
- Stems, cylindrical, hollow, branching at upper nodes, with basal prop roots, and multiple tillers. Leaves, blue-green, 5-20 mm wide, with conspicuous pale mid-vein. Silica hairs on leaf sheath cause the itch. Flowers, on spikes, up to 15 cm long, single or in groups of 3-4, arising from leaf axils at top of the stem. As spikes mature, the cylindrical rice-size seeds progressively break free starting at furthest end.
- Spread: seeds, by birds, floodwater, rodents, farm machinery; along transport routes; contaminant of rice and legume seed.
- Biosecurity: high risk of introduction; one of the 12 worst weeds of sugarcane, and a competitive weed of maize. On Global Invasive Species Database of alien invasive species (IUCN, 2020).
- Biocontrol: several fungi have potential as mycoherbicides.
- Cultural control: hand weed; slashing; cultivation (plus use herbicide); interplant food legumes with maize; vehicle hygiene; IPM - fire, plough, fallow.
- Chemical control: in Australia: hexazinone + diuron. In Fiji, glyphosate; diuron.

### Common Name

Itch grass

### Scientific Name

*Rottboellia cochinchinensis*; it was known previously as *Rottboellia exaltata*. It is a member of the Poaceae.



Photo 1. Thicket of itch grass, *Rottboellia cochinchinensis*.



Photo 2. Swollen areas on stems, the nodes, itch grass, *Rottboellia cochinchinensis*.



Photo 3. Leaves with prominent pale mid-vein, itch grass, *Rottboellia cochinchinensis*.



Photo 4. Prop roots, itch grass, *Rottboellia cochinchinensis*.



Photo 5. Rooted prop roots of itch grass, *Rottboellia cochinchinensis*.

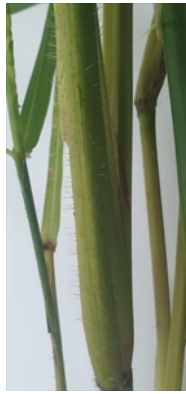


Photo 6. Prominent hairs that cause the itch of itch grass, *Rottboellia cochinchinensis*.



Photo 7. Flower spike, itch grass, *Rottboellia cochinchinensis*.



Photo 8. Flower spike, itch grass, *Rottboellia cochinchinensis*.



Photo 9. Section of the flower spike (called spikelets), containing the seed, itch grass, *Rottboellia cochinchinensis*.

AUTHORS Grahame Jackson, Aradhana Deesh & Mani Mua  
Information from CABI (2019) *Rottboellia cochinchinensis* (itch grass). Invasive Species Compendium. (<https://www.cabi.org/isc/datasheet/47782>); and Itchgrass *Rottboellia cochinchinensis* (2014) Texas Invasive Species Institute. (<http://www.tsusinvasives.org/home/database/rottboellia-cochinchinensis>); and from Global Invasive Species Database (2020) Species profile: *Rottboellia cochinchinensis*. (<http://www.iucngisd.org/gisd/species.php?sc=772>). Photo 9 Steve Hurst, USDA NRCS PLANTS Database, Bugwood.org.

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