

What Are Invasive Plants?

Generally, invasive plants are not native and have been introduced intentionally or accidentally into the local ecology. They have characteristics that allow them to spread quickly and crowd out desirable native vegetation. The most common invasive plants in the Preserve are some perennial and annual grasses and annual flowering plants.

Why Do We Care?

Invasive plants alter the natural ecological community. Studies have shown that invasive plants can negatively impact the environment for native wildlife. They can also be a major contributor to more frequent and more severe fires in the desert.



The Diamond Fire, on June 27, 2023, burned in the Preserve and Regional Park and was fueled in part by invasive grasses.

You Can Help Control Invasive Plants!

Learn more about invasive plants and how to identify them. We recommend removing invasive plants from your property through physical removal or herbicide treatment. You can replace them with desirable native plants that support pollinators and reduce water use.

How to Identify 3 Common Invasive Plants

Stinknet (*Oncosiphon piluliferum*) is an annual flowering plant of up to 2 feet tall that blooms as early as February and is easily identified by its unique rounded, bright yellow flowers. Its carrot-like leaves have a pungent smell.



Buffelgrass (*Pennisetum ciliare*) is a perennial bunchgrass that grows up to 2'-3' tall. The bristly flower head ranges from 1 1/2" to 5" long and can be purple, gray, or yellowish, turning a distinctive golden-brown color when dry.



Fountain Grass (*Pennisetum setaceum*) is a perennial bunchgrass that grows to 6 feet tall. The flowers are red, rosy to purple, bristly, and can be 6"-12" long. Distinctive upright and graceful form with long feathery flower spikes.



The Conservancy's Work With Invasives

In collaboration with the City of Scottsdale, the Conservancy leads numerous initiatives focused on invasive plant removal. Stewards contribute over 1,500 hours each year to map, remove, and monitor populations of invasive plant species. The Conservancy also conducts research experiments on the best techniques to remove invasive plants and leads regional efforts to educate the public and share our findings and strategies.



Stewards working to remove invasive plants from the Preserve

Saving the Desert With AI and Drones

The Conservancy is collaborating with the Intel Corporation to develop artificial intelligence software that has learned to identify buffelgrass in aerial photography. The software would analyze the photos and highlight areas with invasive plants. This process should accelerate our efforts to control buffelgrass by targeting the areas that need removal. To learn more, ask to see the video on the television display.



Intel drone, used with a City permit, to capture aerial photography of the Preserve.