

Miscanthus Cost-Share Assistance



Cost-Share Assistance to Reduce Your Wildfire Risk via Miscanthus Treatment

Miscanthus sinensis is commonly referred to as Chinese or Japanese silvergrass, pampas grass, or maiden grass. It is widely sold as an ornamental grass for landscaping and is seen along roadsides, railroad tracks, and disturbed areas. This perennial grass, originating in eastern Asia, is a tall and densely bunched grass that can grow to 5 to 10 feet in height. The leaves (3 feet long, 1 inch wide) have a silver white midrib and the tips are sharp and recurving. Its showy, fan-shaped, silvery-to-pink flowering panicles emerge in late August to early September and matures in early fall.

Miscanthus is considered weedy and invasive in the Western North Carolina and other parts of the southeast. It is relatively pest and disease-free, is highly salt tolerant, and resistant to damage by deer. Wind-dispersed seeds and robust rhizomes increase the invasive nature. This grass can form extensive infestations by escaping from established ornamental plantings into disturbed areas where it forms dense clumps that displace native vegetation.

Miscanthus is notorious for being a fire hazard. Due to its high flammability rating, *miscanthus* has the potential to fuel massive wildfires, a danger to life and property. Fires from *miscanthus* can get hot enough to scar and kill standing timber. It should not exist within 100 feet of the home to maintain defensible space from wildfire hazards.

Mountain Valleys RC&D's *Miscanthus* Cost-Share Assistance Program offers **50% reimbursement** for residents within our eight-county region to hire out a contractor to treat *miscanthus*, reducing their home's risk of ignition from wildfire.

This program can assist primary, full-time residents living in the following western NC counties: Buncombe, Madison, Henderson, McDowell, Polk, Transylvania, Cleveland, & Rutherford. Preference is given to homes or communities within a moderate-to-high wildfire risk area.

Funding is available until June 2024.

*** Before the project begins, an application and agreement must be submitted and signed for the resident to receive cost-share assistance. ***

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Miscanthus Treatment Recommendations

To qualify for cost-share, miscanthus treatments must be (1) listed on the wildfire risk assessment as a mitigation priority and (2) **within 100 feet of the home (including decks and porches)**. A combination of mowing and chemical treatment is necessary to kill *miscanthus*.

Ideal control measures include the following steps:

1. In late winter or early spring, before new growth starts, **remove previous year's growth by cutting the entire plant back to the ground**. If possible, remove the clippings and all previous year's growth. This removal ensures vigorous new growth, and the lack of any dead leaves or stems creates ideal conditions for the use of chemical control.
2. **When new growth is 12" tall**, in mid-spring or early summer, **spray all green tissue with glyphosate***. Allow the plant to die and, when completely brown, cut the dead foliage back to the ground. NOTE: If it is not feasible to remove the previous year's growth, as indicated in step 1, wait until plants are 12-24" tall, usually early to mid-summer, to proceed with spraying. Coverage will be hampered by standing dead culms from the previous year.
3. If necessary, spray regrowth again in late summer or early fall, when growth is 12", with glyphosate*.
4. Repeat the process the following year, if necessary.

Glyphosate (4% solution) mixed with a surfactant has been found to be the most effective chemical treatment. Other effective chemicals are imazapyr and Arsenal AC (1%).

Chemical spraying of the cut surfaces immediately after cutting plants back (often recommended for controlling woody plants) is NOT an effective way to control *Miscanthus*. An adequate amount (12-24") of actively growing green foliage should be present for good chemical control.

Burning, especially in late fall or winter, will increase *miscanthus* growth, vigor, and seed set. Burning should only be done by a professional and as a management practice when it can be followed by chemical control. **This cost-share program does not support burning *miscanthus* as an effective treatment.**

Miscanthus Recommended Treatment Timeline												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Growing Season	Dormant		Leaf Growing Season					Stems Emerge	Flowers and seeds out		Dormant	
Mechanical	Mow											
Chemical				Spray new, green shoots; 4-12" tall								

Examples

Many, well-established plants				mow	spray			mow	spray			mow
1-5 plants		cut, bag, and dispose of seed heads before mowing		mow	spray			mow	spray			
New shoots				spray				spray	if necessary			

Miscanthus Cost-share Assistance Checklist

Use this checklist as you are going through the cost-share assistance process. Email wildfire@mountainvalleysrcd.org or call 828-206-6159 to submit paperwork and ask questions.

Application Packet: **Must be completed before project begins. Send the following 4 items as a complete application packet.

- NC Forest Service Wildfire Risk **Home Assessment:** Free service, takes 30-45 min, good for 5 years. *Miscanthus* treatment must be identified as a mitigation priority on the home assessment to qualify for cost-share. Contact your local NCFS County Ranger to schedule (or contact MV to coordinate): www.ncforestservation.gov/contacts.
- Contractor quote(s)** for the *miscanthus* treatment. We can offer contractor suggestions, but it is up to the resident to choose the contractor who will complete the work. The contractor quote(s) must be itemized with each task individually priced. A resident may choose up to 2 contractors to complete tasks (no more than 2 contractors on the application).
- 2-3 before pictures** of the project area(s). Try to include the house in proximity to the project in at least one photo.
- Mitigation cost-share assistance **application form**.

Reimbursement Agreement: **Must be completed before project begins.

- Read and sign the reimbursement agreement that is sent after the application is accepted. Note: The reimbursement amount is capped at \$2,000 for residents and \$4,000 for communities.
- Send the **signed reimbursement agreement** back. Once the agreement is signed, have the contractor complete the mitigation work.

Project Summary: Once the project is complete, pay the contractor(s) invoice in full. Complete and send the project summary form with the following items attached within 30 days:

- Proof of payment** in the form of an invoice with “Paid in full” noted or \$0 balance. This proof of payment must be a receipt from the contractor.
- 2-3 after pictures** of the project area(s) from the same location(s) as the before pictures.

Reimbursement: Once we have received the project summary form, receipt and pictures, we will process the reimbursement. A check will be mailed to the mailing address indicated on your application within 30 days of receipt of final documentation. Reimbursements are capped at \$2,000 for residents and \$4,000 for community projects.

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Appendix

Links to more information:

Miscanthus sinensis

Miscanthus: Madison County's Wildfire Grass (NCFS):

https://www.ncforestservice.gov/contacts/pdf/Miscanthus_Info_Sheet_Madison_Co.pdf

NC Extension Gardener Plant Toolbox: *Miscanthus sinensis* (NC State Extension):

<https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/miscanthus-sinensis/>

Miscanthus Management Fact Sheet (Univ. Minnesota):

<https://miscanthus.cfans.umn.edu/sites/miscanthus.cfans.umn.edu/files/2021-07/miscanthusmanagementfactsheet.pdf>

Fire Effects Information: *Miscanthus sinensis* Index of Species Information (USDA Forest Service):

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/database/feis/plants/graminoid/missin/all.html>

Invasives Species: Chinese silvergrass (Invasive.org):

<https://www.invasive.org/browse/subinfo.cfm?sub=3052>

Wildfire Preparedness

Resist Wildfire NC (NC Forest Service): <http://www.resistwildfirenc.org/>

Fire Resistant Landscaping in NC: <https://content.ces.ncsu.edu/fire-resistant-landscaping-in-north-carolina>

Firewise USA Program: <https://www.nfpa.org/Public-Education/Fire-causes-and-risks/Wildfire/Firewise-USA>

Mountain Valleys Forest Program and Resources: <https://www.mountainvalleysrcd.org/forest>



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