

Manitoba's Species At Risk

Threatened



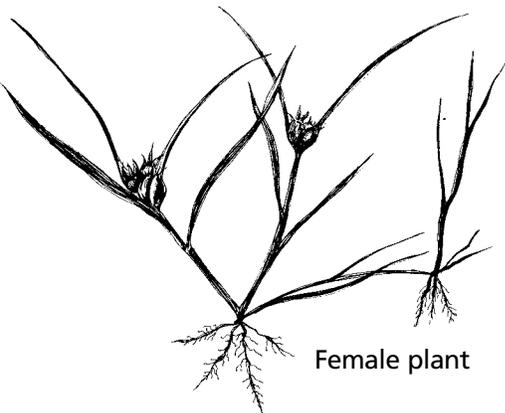
Buffalograss

Buchloë dactyloides

Any native Manitoba species likely to become endangered or at risk due to low or declining numbers in Manitoba if the factors affecting it don't improve. Threatened species are declared as such by regulation under the *Endangered Species Act*.



Male plant



Female plant

Buffalograss (*Buchloë dactyloides*) is a provincially threatened plant. It is a short grass with greyish green, slightly hairy leaves that can grow up to 10 centimetres long. The stems creep along the ground and root at nodes forming dense circular patches that can reach greater than 3 metres across, or elongated patches along ridges. Male and female flowers almost always occur on separate plants. Female flowers (below left) are hidden by the leaf blades and enclosed in a bur-like structure held on a short stalk near the ground. Male flowering stems are more clearly visible (top left) and can be up to 20 centimetres tall. Male flowers are held on stalks above the leaves in one-sided clusters that can be up to 15 millimetres long. The orange pollen of the male flowers makes Buffalograss fairly distinctive during its peak blooming period.

Habitat

Buffalograss is found in shortgrass and mixed-grass prairies. It is tolerant of grazing, and is often found in native pastures. It is typically found growing in clay to loam soils along lower slopes of hills and ridges and along gradual slopes of river and creek valleys. Its resistance to drought gives it a competitive edge over other vegetation unable to adapt to dry conditions.

Life History

Buffalograss is a long-lived, fast growing, perennial grass that forms spreading circular clones by rooting along horizontal stems. It also reproduces sexually. Male flowers begin to produce wind-dispersed pollen near the end of June, and flowering is generally complete by mid-July. Female flowers are enclosed in bur-like structures that protect seeds and aid in long-distance dispersal by

large herbivores. Ripened seed shatters by late July or early August.

Distribution

Buffalograss ranges from Manitoba and Saskatchewan, through 22 American states, south into Mexico. In Canada, Buffalograss is only found along the Souris and Blind River valleys of Saskatchewan and Manitoba. As of 2006, the known extent of its range in Manitoba was approximately 114 square kilometres.

Status

Buffalograss is considered very rare in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. It is also considered rare in several states near the eastern and western edges of its range, but is more common within the core of its range. Overall, it is considered secure globally by NatureServe.

Buffalograss was likely never common in Canada, being on the edge of its global range. Much of the area in which Buffalograss is found still persists as native pastures. It is likely that some habitat has been lost or fragmented by conversion for cultivation. The threat of further habitat loss and degradation still exists. Other threats include invasive exotic species, such as Leafy spurge and the lack of natural disturbances that Buffalograss is adapted to such as grazing or fire. Buffalograss is listed as Threatened by regulation under Manitoba's *Endangered Species Act*. It is also listed as Threatened under Canada's *Species at Risk Act*.

Stewardship and recovery

Buffalograss is influenced by grazing, moisture, competing vegetation and other characteristics such as soil and topographic position. In the shortgrass and mixed-grass

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Cool Facts

Buffalograss is believed to have spread from Mexico to Canada with large migratory herbivores, such as bison.

Scientists have speculated that some Buffalograss may be as old as 15,000 years.

In dry areas of the United States, Buffalograss is used as a low maintenance alternative on golf courses and lawns, reducing water and chemical use.

Due to the typical production of male and female flowers on separate plants, male and female plants were originally described as two different species.



prairies of the United States, Buffalograss is a common range plant. It responds favourably to moderate or heavy grazing although responses vary depending on site characteristics and type of grazing. The response of Buffalograss to different types of grazing in Manitoba is unknown. Detailed mapping of Buffalograss at sites in Manitoba by the Manitoba Conservation Data Centre provides baseline data that can be monitored over time to detect its responses to changes in grazing.

At the national level, a recovery strategy has been drafted and beneficial management practices are being prepared. The national recovery goal for Buffalograss is to maintain all naturally occurring populations in Canada. Developing and applying beneficial management practices, increasing landowner, stakeholder and industry awareness of the species and its needs, and working with these groups to conserve the species and its habitat are all key to the recovery of this plant.

Get involved in recovery

If you have Buffalograss on your property, congratulations. Your land management skills have helped to maintain an important species for both livestock and ecosystem health. Buffalograss is adapted to grazing, tolerates drought conditions and has good palatability, high protein and nutrient content year-round.

Please consider contacting Manitoba Conservation at one of the numbers listed below if you find Buffalograss or would like more information on what you can do to further enhance your land for this and other native Manitoba plant and animal species.

Manitoba Conservation Wildlife and Ecosystem Protection Branch

Box 24, 200 Saulteaux Crescent
Winnipeg MB R3J 3W3
204-945-7775

www.manitoba.ca/conservation/wildlife/

Manitoba Conservation Regional Offices

Western Region
Brandon, Manitoba
204-726-6441

Partners in production of this fact sheet:
Manitoba Conservation, Wildlife and
Ecosystem Protection Branch
Environment Canada, Canadian Wildlife Service
Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation

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Extirpated Species

Any species once native to Manitoba that has disappeared through all of its Manitoba range. Extirpated species are declared as such by regulation under the Endangered Species Act.

Endangered Species

Any native Manitoba species threatened to disappear through all or most of its Manitoba range. Endangered species are declared as such by regulation under the Endangered Species Act.

Threatened Species

Any native Manitoba species likely to become endangered or at risk due to low or declining numbers in Manitoba if the factors affecting it don't improve. Threatened species are declared as such by regulation under the Endangered Species Act.

Vulnerable Species

Species not regulated under the Endangered Species Act but which could eventually be considered Endangered or Threatened if the factors affecting them do not improve.