

# Rottboellia cochinchinensis

## Recognize the problem

Family: Poaceae (grass family)

Common name: Itchgrass

Luganda: Ssezinyo

Sturdy, erect annual grass (up to 4 m), which usually tillers prolifically; characterised by roots that grow from nodes above the soil surface near the base of the plant ('brace roots'); jointed seeds that break-off as they mature, from the top of the spike down; siliceous hairs on the leaf sheath.

Leaves: Pale green, leaf-blades 15–45 cm long; hairs on the leaf sheath which can penetrate and irritate the skin.

Flowers: Inflorescence is a cylindrical spikelet up to 15 cm long; borne on a sturdy stalk.

## Background

Origin: Indo-China region (now Vietnam). Some evidence of a second centre of diversity in East Africa.

Introduction: As seed contaminant.

Habitat: Tropical regions; grows along roadsides and in open, well-drained sites and in warm-season crops in a variety of habitats; a primary colonizer of disturbed land (in eastern Africa).

Spread: Seeds are spread by water, animals and machinery.

Invades: Considered as one of the 12 worst weeds that infest sugarcane in the world and as a very competitive weed in maize.

Impacts: Itchgrass is an aggressive weed under various ecological conditions in Uganda. Its irritating stem hairs make it difficult to control manually in small-scale farms. It is a secondary host to a number of crop pests such as cereal stem borers. A weed density of 50 plants/m<sup>2</sup> can reduce maize yields by almost 50%.

Itchgrass, mature flowering plant. (Photo by © CIRAD)



Itchgrass leaf sheath showing irritating hairs. (Photo by © CIRAD)



Scientific name(s) > *Rottboellia cochinchinensis*

The recommendations in this factsheet are relevant to: All Countries



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