

# Pennisetum clandestinum

## Kikuyugrass

*Pennisetum clandestinum* Chiov.

Family: Poaceae

**Description:** Perennial, valued forage, forms thick and tight turf. Ungrazed, shoots and leaves reach 2 ft tall. Shoots are thick. Leaves are light green. Inflorescences 2 tiny spikes concealed in axils, hence the species name. Rarely produces seed except at high elevations where the kikuyugrass has been mowed. Thus its primary mode of spreading is vegetatively. A serious weed of the tropics and subtropics. Though a common pasture grass throughout Hawai'i, it is a federally declared noxious weed. It is sometimes used as a lawn grass as on the terraces of the Incan ruins at Machu Picchu in Peru. *Pennisetum* in Latin means feathery bristles, which describes the inflorescences of this genus; *clandestinum*, hidden, for the position of its flowers<sup>(5, 26, 70)</sup>.

**Distribution:** A native of the highlands of East Africa. A serious weed in California. Naturalized in dry to moist areas on O'ahu, Lana'i, Maui, and Hawai'i from sea level to 6000 ft. First collected in 1938 on Hawai'i<sup>(26, 70)</sup>.

**Environmental impact:** A weed in row crops and especially perennial crops. Smothers low-growing plants.



**Management:** Sensitive to glyphosate and imazapyr. HAVO staff reported control with glyphosate at 1% of product in water applied to wet the green foliage (Chris Zimmer, HAVO). Susceptible to the yellow sugarcane aphid (*Sipha* sp.).