



# ALLOTEROPSIS SEMIALATA

## Cockatoo Grass

An erect, tufted perennial, 60–90 cm tall. *Culms* arising from a thickened stock with striate scales. *Nodes* densely clothed in short hairs. *Leaves* mostly basal. *Leaf sheaths* striate, covered in short, silky hairs, shorter than the internodes and rather loose. *Ligule* very short and membranous with long, silky hairs. *Leaf blades* flat, rolled when dry, up to 3 mm wide, tapering gradually to a point, quite densely hairy towards the base, not stiff.

*Inflorescence* a digitate panicle of 2–5 racemes, 8–15 cm long, usually in a single whorl; the raceme axis slender, rigid, triangular in cross-section, sparsely hairy with a tuft of hairs at the base, yellowish to brown in colour. *Spikelets* (S) pedicelled, all similar, 6 mm long, usually in pairs, but sometimes in threes, the pedicels unequal, usually purplish in colour, falling entire at maturity. *Florets* 2, dissimilar, the lower male, the upper bisexual. *Glumes* (G<sub>1</sub>, G<sub>2</sub>) distinctly unequal; the lower glume (G<sub>1</sub>) much shorter than the upper, more or less membranous, the margins slightly hairy, 5-nerved with the centre nerve produced into a short spine; the upper glume (G<sub>2</sub>) the length of the spikelet, 5-nerved, the margin with a distinct membranous flap, apparent only at maturity, which is fringed with erect hairs. *Lemma* (L<sub>1</sub>) of the lower floret as long as G<sub>2</sub>, membranous, 5-nerved, slightly shortly hairy on the margin. *Palea* (P<sub>1</sub>) less than ½ the length of L<sub>1</sub>, deeply divided into 2 lobes and membranous. *Anthers* 3, 3 mm long. *Lemma* (L<sub>2</sub>) of the upper floret similar in size and shape to L<sub>1</sub>, somewhat thickened, 5-nerved, the central nerve produced into a short awn 2–4 mm long. *Palea* (P<sub>2</sub>) shorter, 2-keeled, with 2 membranous flaps at the base, somewhat thickened on the back. *Anthers* 3, 3 mm long.

This grass is widespread in the open forest country of eastern Queensland, where it is eaten in the young stages of growth by stock. It may be locally abundant, but is not highly productive.

### REFERENCES

Bailey (1902),<sup>1</sup> p. 1836 (as *Axonopus semialatus*); Gardner (1952),<sup>2</sup> p. 231; Bor (1960),<sup>3</sup> pp. 276–77; Vickery (1961),<sup>4</sup> p. 81.

### KEY TO SPECIES

Perennial. Base with thick, persistent, silky leaf sheaths. Leaves without distinct marginal hairs in lower part. Spikelets 6 mm long (cockatoo grass)

*A. semialata*<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>

Annual. Base without thick, persistent leaf sheaths. Leaves with distinct marginal hairs in lower part. Spikelets 3–4 mm long.

*A. cimicina*<sup>3</sup>