



ANTHOXANTHUM ODORATUM

Sweet Vernal Grass

A tufted perennial, 10–100 cm high. *Culms* erect or spreading, fairly slender, unbranched, rather stiff, smooth. *Nodes* 1–3, smooth, hairless. *Leaves* basal and on the culms. *Leaf sheaths* rounded on the back, loosely to densely bearded at the apex, otherwise smooth or loosely hairy. *Ligule* membranous, 1–5 mm long, blunt. *Leaf blades* 1–12 cm long and 1.5–5 mm broad, flat, gradually tapering from near the base to a fine point.

Inflorescence a very dense to somewhat loose, spike-like panicle, 1–12 cm long and 6–15 mm wide, green or purplish; the branches short. *Spikelets* (S) compressed, 6–10 mm long, all similar, at maturity disarticulating above the persistent glumes. *Florets* 3, the lower 2 male or neuter, the upper bisexual and shorter than the lower. *Glumes* (G_1 , G_2) keeled down their backs, pointed, loosely hairy, thin and membranous; the lower glume (G_1) about $\frac{1}{2}$ the length of the upper, 1-nerved; the upper (G_2) the length of the spikelet, 3-nerved, enclosing the florets. *Lemmas* (L_1 , L_2 , L_3) dissimilar, those of the 2 lower sterile florets (L_1 , L_2) 3–3.5 mm long, bluntly 2-lobed at the tip, firm, brown and hairy, except for a translucent membranous tip, 4–5-nerved; the lower (L_1) awned from above the middle of the back, the awn straight and 2–4 mm long; the upper (L_2) with a stouter bent awn from the base, the awn dark brown and twisted below, 6–9 mm long; fertile lemma (L_3) 2 mm long, 3-nerved, rounded on the sides and back, smooth, shining, brown. *Palea* (P_3) as long as the lemma, 1-nerved. *Anthems* 2 (3 in the 2 sterile florets when these are male), 3–4.5 mm long.

This grass, which is common in European pastures, is rarely found in Queensland, where it is confined to the Stanthorpe area and cleared land behind Nambour. It is noted for its fragrant smell, but is of low productivity and not particularly relished by livestock.

REFERENCES

Gardner (1952), p. 28; Burbidge and Gray (1970), p. 62; Willis (1970), p. 134; Beadle *et al.* (1972), p. 660; Vickery (1975), pp. 282–83; Black (1978), p. 163.

KEY TO SPECIES

Only one species occurs in southern Queensland.