



ARUNDO DONAX

Giant Reed

A robust perennial up to 6 m tall, spreading by rhizomes and with a large, showy flower-head. *Culms* stout and usually in large masses arising from thick, knotty rhizomes, sparingly branched. *Nodes* mostly hidden by the leaf sheaths. *Leaves* green, numerous, arranged alternately and opposite up the culms, smooth. *Leaf sheaths* firm, striate, mostly longer than the internodes. *Ligule* membranous, 3 mm long, associated with silky hairs on the base of the leaf blade. *Leaf blades* flat, smooth, though slightly rough down the margins, 10–70 cm long and up to 7 cm broad on the main culms, clasping the stem at the base, rather evenly spaced along the culm, gradually narrowing from the base to a fine point.

Inflorescence a large and showy contracted or effuse panicle, erect, 30–70 cm long, barely exerted from the uppermost leaf sheath, panicle branches long and flexuous, borne in clusters at intervals along the axis. *Spikelets* (S) about 15 mm long, borne singly on slender pedicels along primary or secondary branches, disarticulating and falling at maturity from the persistent glumes, purplish in colour. *Florets* 2–7, the lower ones bisexual, the upper ones variously sterile, shortly pedicellate. *Glumes* (G₁, G₂) subequal, papery-membranous, slightly keeled and glabrous; the lower glume (G₁) 10 mm long, 5-nerved, the central nerve produced into a short awn or point; the upper glume (G₂) 3-nerved, slightly shorter than G₁. *Lemmas* (L) slightly exceeding and broader than the glumes, nerves 5–7, not equal, a short 1–2 mm awn extending from the pointed or slightly bifid tip, covered on the lower half of the back (especially laterally) with long, fine, silky hairs. *Paleas* (P) about half the length of the lemmas, delicately membranous, 2-keeled, slightly scabrid on the upper half of the keels. *Anthers* 3, up to 3 mm long.

The grass was originally introduced as a cultivated ornamental and has escaped. It is sometimes encountered in damp habitats close to water, such as river- or creek-banks or swamps in settled coastal areas. A horticultural form, known as var. *versicolor*, has longitudinally variegated leaves.

REFERENCES

Gardner (1952), p. 133; Willis (1970), p. 168; Black (1978), p. 112.

KEY TO SPECIES

One species only naturalized in southern Queensland. Native to the Mediterranean regions, Madagascar and India.