

# AVENA FATUA

## Wild Oat

A robust annual, 30–150 cm high. *Culms* tufted or solitary, erect or kneeled at the base, usually rather stout, smooth and hairless. *Nodes* 3–5, smooth or slightly hairy. *Leaves* basal and on the culms. *Leaf sheaths* rounded on the back, the lower ones often loosely hairy, otherwise without hairs. *Ligule* blunt, up to 6 mm long, membranous. *Leaf blades* 10–45 cm long, 3–15 mm wide, rough, gradually pointed.

*Inflorescence* an open, nodding panicle, 10–40 cm long and up to 20 cm wide, the branches mostly clustered, slender and rough, unequal. *Spikelets* (S) loosely scattered, pendulous, 18–25 mm long, breaking up at maturity above the persistent glumes and below each lemma. *Florets* 2–3, similar, bisexual or sometimes the upper one(s) male. *Glumes* (G<sub>1</sub>, G<sub>2</sub>), finely pointed, as long as, or longer than, the spikelet and more or less enclosing it, equal or slightly unequal, smooth, 7–11 nerved, becoming papery at maturity. *Lemmas* (L) 14–26 mm long, shortly 2-toothed at the apex, rounded on the back, becoming rigid and tough at maturity, 7–9-nerved, often becoming brown with dense stiff hairs in the lower  $\frac{2}{3}$ , with a dense beard of hairs at the base around a horseshoe-shaped scar on the second lemma, stoutly awned from the middle of the back, the awn 2.5–4.5 cm long, bent and twisted, dark brown in the lower part. *Paleas* (P) about  $\frac{2}{3}$  the length of the lemmas, 2-keeled and minutely 2-toothed, minutely hairy on the two keels. *Anthers* 3, 2–4 mm long.

This is a weed of winter cereal crops such as wheat, oats and barley, particularly on the heavier arable soils of the Darling Downs. It sometimes also may be found as a weed of waste places in that area. Both *A. fatua* and the closely similar *A. sterilis* ssp. *ludoviciana* are important temperate region weeds originating from the Mediterranean area. Hybrid forms of *A. sativa* x *A. fatua* also may be encountered (Simon 1980a, p. 27).

### REFERENCES

Bailey (1902),<sup>1</sup> p. 1189; Gardner (1952),<sup>2</sup> pp. 36–37; Burbidge and Gray (1970),<sup>3</sup> p. 38; Willis (1970),<sup>4</sup> pp. 123–24; Beadle *et al.* (1972),<sup>5</sup> pp. 646–47; Black (1978),<sup>6</sup> pp. 165–66; Jessop (1981),<sup>7</sup> pp. 433–34.

### KEY TO SPECIES

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| <p>1. Spikelet axis not disarticulating between glumes and lower floret at maturity (i.e. non-shattering) (common oat)</p>                | <p><i>A. sativa</i><sup>2,3,4,5,6,7</sup></p>                             |
| Spikelet axis readily disarticulating between glumes and lowest floret at maturity (i.e. shattering).                                     | 2   |
| <p>2. Rhachilla readily disarticulating between lemmas; second lemma with a scar at base, third lemma, when present, awned (wild oat)</p> | <p><i>A. fatua</i><sup>1,2,3,4,5,6,7</sup></p>                            |
| Rhachilla tough and continuous between lemmas; second lemma without a scar at base, third lemma, when present, awnless (ludo wild oat)    | <p><i>A. sterilis</i><br/>ssp. <i>ludoviciana</i><sup>3,4,5,6,7</sup></p> |

