



# AXONOPUS COMPRESSUS

## Broad-leaved Carpet or Mat Grass

A strongly stoloniferous perennial, up to 50 cm high. *Culms* prostrate, forming elongated stolons with short internodes, which root freely from the nodes, also producing strongly compressed, densely leafy shoots, these later developing into the erect flowering culms. *Nodes* often hairy. *Leaves* mostly basal or at the rooted nodes. *Leaf sheaths* strongly keeled, overlapping, striate, often purplish in colour and longer than the internodes. *Ligule* short and membranous. *Leaf blades* folded at the base, becoming flat and then narrowing towards the tip to a boat-shaped point, smooth and shining, mostly flat, 3–8 mm broad, 2–12 cm long, but tending to be longer on the culms than on the stolons.

*Inflorescence* a panicle of 3–4 slender spikes in a digitate arrangement originating from two or more whorls, 5–8 cm long, the axis triangular in section and slender. *Spikelets* (S) 2.2–2.5 mm long, arranged alternately in 2 overlapping rows and closely adpressed to the axis, all similar, falling entire at maturity. *Florets* 2, the lower neuter and reduced to a sterile lemma, the upper bisexual. *Glumes* reduced to 1, the lower glume absent; the upper ( $G_2$ ) present, membranous, 4- or 5-nerved, the lateral ones close to the margin, slightly rounded on the back. *Lemma* ( $L_1$ ) of the lower sterile floret similar to  $G_2$ , 4-nerved. *Palea* absent. *Lemma* ( $L_2$ ) of the upper fertile floret shorter than the spikelet, 1.8–2 mm long, tough, shining and translucent, faintly 4-nerved, rounded on the back and partly embracing the palea. *Palea* ( $P_2$ ) similar to  $L_2$ , membranous, faintly 2-nerved. *Anthers* 3, 0.5 mm long.

This introduced grass is widely distributed in the coastal and subcoastal country of eastern Queensland where the rainfall exceeds about 1000 mm. It also is found in many other tropical and subtropical regions of the world. However, it is not as abundant as narrow-leaved carpet grass (*A. affinis*) which is now regarded as a weed grass of run-down pastures, where it may form solid mats or carpets to the exclusion of most other plants. In the spring and early summer, both species provide a measure of grazing, especially once soil fertility is improved and legume species introduced. However, it is of poor quality late in the season. Broad-leaved carpet grass is cultivated as a lawn grass for moist areas in shade, but also may be a serious lawn weed.

### REFERENCES

Bailey (1902),<sup>1</sup> p. 1814 (as *Paspalum platycaule*); Gardner (1952),<sup>2</sup> p. 238; Vickery (1961),<sup>3</sup> pp. 113–15; Barnard (1969),<sup>4</sup> pp. 4–9; Burbidge and Gray (1970),<sup>5</sup> p. 63; Willis (1970),<sup>6</sup> p. 207; Beadle *et al.* (1972),<sup>7</sup> p. 665; Martin (1975).<sup>8</sup>

### KEY TO SPECIES

Leaf blades 2–4 mm wide, those of stolons and culms similar in length. Spikelets about 2 mm long; fertile floret about length of spikelet (narrow-leaved carpet or mat grass)

*A. affinis*<sup>3,4,5,7,8</sup>

Leaf blades 4–10 mm wide, those of stolons shorter than those of culms. Spikelets 2.2–2.5 mm long; fertile floret distinctly shorter than spikelet (broad-leaved carpet or mat grass)

*A. compressus*<sup>1,2,3,4,6</sup>