



BRACHYACHNE TENELLA

Slender Native Couch

A slender, perennial grass with creeping stolons. *Culms* slender, erect or stooling at the base, smooth, hairless, straw-coloured at maturity, often branched at the nodes, particularly the lower ones, which also may be rooted. *Nodes* distinct, slightly constricted, without hairs. *Leaves* more on the culms than at the base. *Leaf sheaths* loose, smooth, hairless, striate, shorter than the internodes. *Ligule* a very short membranous rim with a few hairs. *Leaf blades* flat, 1–2 mm broad, up to 10 cm long, tapering from the base to a point.

Inflorescence a panicle of 3–6 spikes, 4–7 cm long, arranged digitately, straw-coloured at maturity. *Spikelets* (S) about 2.5 mm in length, strongly laterally flattened, sessile and arranged in 2 rows on one side of the flattened axis, disarticulating above the persistent glumes at maturity. *Floret* 1, bisexual. *Glumes* (G₁, G₂) slightly unequal, membranous, strongly keeled, 1-nerved, rough along the back of the nerve, blunt at the tip; the lower glume (G₁) about 2.5 mm long, the upper (G₂) slightly less. *Lemma* (L) membranous, about 1 mm long, strongly 1-keeled, 3-nerved, the back covered with dense, short hairs along the nerves. *Palea* (P) with 2 nerves close to the middle, strongly keeled, the back covered with dense short hairs down the nerves. *Anthers* 3, 0.3 mm long.

This is a grass of the drier western regions of inland Queensland, but it extends into some western parts of the southeast. It is eaten by stock, but its value is not well known. Prussic acid poisoning has been reported in sheep grazing young growth of the more common *B. convergens*.

REFERENCES

Bailey (1902),¹ p. 1893 (as *Cynodon* spp.); Gardner & Hubbard (1938a),² t. 3362; Gardner (1952),³ pp. 212–15; Lazarides (1970),⁴ p. 82; Lazarides (1972),⁵ pp. 41–48 (Key to Australian species); Black (1978),⁶ p. 203; Jessop (1981),⁷ pp. 666–67.

KEY TO SPECIES

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| 1. Spikes 1.5–8 cm long, exerted from uppermost leaf sheath. Leaf blades up to 7 cm long. | 2 |
| Spikes 0.4–1.1 cm long, enclosed in or exerting laterally from upper leaf sheath. Leaf blades 0.1–1 cm long; plant prostrate | <i>B. prostrata</i> ^{2,3,5} |
| 2. Spikelets 1.8–2.2 mm long (slender native couch) | <i>B. tenella</i> ^{1,2,3,5} |
| Spikelets 3.0–4.5 mm long. | 3 |
| 3. Leaves hairless, except at base of blade. Upper glume laterally compressed with a winged keel (common native couch) | <i>B. convergens</i> ^{1,2,3,5,7} |
| Leaves loosely covered with fine, tubercle-based hairs. Upper glume rounded and not keeled and winged on back, mid-nerve prominent (hairy native couch) | <i>B. ciliaris</i> ^{2,4,5,6,7} |