



# *BROMUS UNIOLOIDES*

## Prairie Grass

Annual, up to 1 m tall, fairly robust and erect or spreading. *Culms* round, not branched, smooth, slightly striate. *Nodes* obvious, pigmented, hairless, the internodes generally longer than the leaf sheaths. *Leaves* well distributed. *Leaf sheaths* round, rather loose, smooth, striate, the lower ones often covered with short, fine hairs and prominently veined, the upper ones almost hairless. *Ligule* a prominent membranous collar about 4 mm long. *Leaf blades* flat, up to 30 cm long and 8 mm wide, tapering gradually from above the middle to a point, very shortly hairy on the upper surface only, slightly rough down the margin, the nerves prominent.

*Inflorescence* a large, open panicle, up to 30 cm long, with primary branches in well-spaced whorls of up to 3 branches, as much as 15 cm long, bearing 1 to several pedicelled spikelets, the branches slightly rough or shortly hairy; in impoverished specimens, the inflorescence may be reduced to a simple raceme. *Spikelets* (S) all alike, large, 2-3 cm long, markedly flattened, with numerous florets. *Florets* 6-12, all similar, though decreasing in size up the spikelet, all fertile. *Glumes* ( $G_1$ ,  $G_2$ ) unequal, strongly keeled and rough down the back of the keels, otherwise smooth, the nerves prominent; the lower glume ( $G_1$ ) about 12 mm long, shorter than the upper, 7-nerved; the upper ( $G_2$ ) about 18 mm long, 9-nerved. *Lemmas* (L) closely overlapping in the spikelet, slightly longer than  $G_2$  and similar, 11-nerved, keeled, the tip often produced into a short awn 1- mm long. *Paleas* (P) about  $\frac{2}{3}$  the length of the lemmas, 2-nerved and strongly 2-keeled, concave on the back between the keels, the margins with stiff bristles. *Anthers* 3, about 2 mm long, though occasionally much longer.

This is a common winter and spring weed grass of gardens and moist, shady places in southeast Queensland. Originally from South America, it is now widely distributed in temperate regions. Known and cultivated in North America as rescue grass, it is also cultivated in the moister parts of southern Queensland as Preibe's prairie grass, where it grows well as a winter pasture species, particularly under irrigation.

### REFERENCES

Bailey (1902),<sup>1</sup> p. 1918; Gardner (1952),<sup>2</sup> pp. 94-99; Barnard (1969),<sup>3</sup> pp. 24-28; Burbidge and Gray (1970),<sup>4</sup> pp. 29-30; Willis (1970),<sup>5</sup> pp. 110-15; Beadle *et al.* (1972),<sup>6</sup> p. 632; Black (1978),<sup>7</sup> pp. 135-39; Jessop (1981),<sup>8</sup> p. 432.

### KEY TO SPECIES

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|---|---|
| 1. Lemmas pointed, not distinctly awned (prairie grass) | <i>B. unioloides</i> <sup>3,4,5,6</sup> |
| Lemmas with distinct awns.                              | 2                                       |

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| 2. | Spikelets (excluding awns) less than 15 mm long; awns usually shorter than lemmas.  | 3  |
|    | Spikelets (excluding awns) more than 20 mm long; awns usually longer than lemmas.   | 5  |
| 3. | Lemmas with dorsal awn arising 2–3 mm below apex. Glumes glabrous.  | <i>B. alopecuroides</i> <sup>2</sup>                             |
|    | Awns subterminal, arising close to apex. Glumes usually minutely hairy.   | 4  |
| 4. | Lemmas 6.5–8 mm long (soft brome)   | <i>B. hordeaceus</i> <sup>2,4,5,6,7</sup><br>( <i>mollis</i> )   |
|    | Lemmas 8–11 mm long.  | <i>B. pseudothominii</i>   |
| 5. | Inflorescence open, with flexuous branches.   | 6  |
|    | Inflorescence strongly contracted, branches stiff, erect.   | 7  |
| 6. | Spikelets 50–90 mm long, including awns. Lemma very narrow, apparently tapering towards long, subterminal awn (great brome) | <i>B. diandrus</i> <sup>2,4,5,6,7,8</sup><br>( <i>gussonii</i> ) |
|    | Spikelets 25–40 mm long, including awns. Lemma broad, awn distinctly subterminal (land brome)                               | <i>B. arenarius</i> <sup>2,5,8</sup>                             |
| 7. | Inflorescence densely contracted (red brome)  | <i>B. rubens</i> <sup>2,4,5,6,7</sup>                            |
|    | Inflorescence not densely contracted (lesser brome)   | <i>B. madritensis</i> <sup>2,5,6,7</sup>                         |