



## CHRYSOPOGON FALLAX

### Golden Beardgrass

A tufted, erect perennial, up to 2 m tall. *Culms* erect or slightly kneeed at the base, usually unbranched, smooth or slightly hairy, slightly striate. *Nodes* prominent, without hairs. *Leaves* mostly basal. *Leaf sheaths* overlapping at the base, rounded, smooth, sometimes slightly hairy; older ones persisting as fibres, giving a woolly appearance to the base (hence the name "woolly butt" sometimes given). *Ligule* a minute fringe of hairs. *Leaf blades* up to 45 cm long and 4.5 mm wide, tapering to an acute point, flat above and incurved below, the upper side smooth or slightly to markedly hairy.

*Inflorescence* a panicle, 7–21 cm long, the axis slender, flexuous, the primary branches unequal in length, up to 6 cm long in a series of whorls of up to 16 per whorl, erect or partly deflexed. *Spikelets* ( $S_1$ ,  $S_2$ ) invariably in a single triplet at the end of each primary branch, 1 sessile, the other 2 pedicellate, breaking up and falling entire at maturity from the joints and pedicels. *Florets* 2 in each spikelet, the lower floret neuter and reduced to an empty lemma, the upper floret bisexual in the sessile spikelet and male or neuter in the pedicellate spikelets. *Sessile spikelet* ( $S_1$ ) fertile, narrow, acute, 9–11 mm long, including the callus; the callus pointed, distinctively bearded with pale yellow hairs up to 2 mm long. *Glumes* ( $G_1$ ,  $G_2$ ) not persistent, unequal, tough and hardened; the lower glume ( $G_1$ ) 6 mm long, 2-keeled in its upper third, the tip truncate or 2-toothed, 5–7-nerved, the back with a lateral band of tubercle-based spines; the upper ( $G_2$ ) slightly obtuse or with a ragged tip, 5 mm long, 3–5-nerved, usually rough, tough, except on the margins, keel running out into a slender rough awn up to 10 mm long, the back with small spines. *Lemma* ( $L_1$ ) of the lower sterile floret membranous, obtuse, 2–3-nerved, 5–7.5 mm long. *Palea* absent. *Lemma* ( $L_2$ ) of the upper fertile floret membranous, 2-lobed, with translucent and hairy margins, 5–7 mm long, the middle nerve produced into a stout awn, kneeed and twisted below the knee, 20–40 mm long, densely hairy and dark brown. *Palea* ( $P_2$ ) blunt, nerveless or 2-nerved, mostly hairless, about 4 mm long. *Anthers* 3, 3–5 mm long. *Pedicellate spikelets* ( $S_2$ ) male, rarely sterile, acute, awned, purplish, about the same length as the sessile spikelet; callus minute, shortly bearded. *Glumes* ( $G_1$ ,  $G_2$ ) unequal, thickened; the lower glume ( $G_1$ ) acute, 7–9-nerved, the central nerve produced into an awn up to 7 mm long, the back rough but not spiny; the upper ( $G_2$ ) acute, 3-nerved, a membranous portion fringed with hairs on the upper margin. *Lemma* ( $L_1$ ) of the lower sterile floret membranous, acute; 2–3-nerved, 6–9 mm long. *Lemma* ( $L_2$ ) of the upper male floret slightly shorter than  $L_1$ , 2–3-nerved, hairless. *Palea* ( $P_2$ ) oblong, membranous, up to 4.5 mm long, rarely absent. *Anthers* 3, 3–5 mm long or reduced.

This is a widespread grass found growing on a wide range of soils in southern Queensland and beyond. Although common, it is not usually locally abundant and is mainly a grass of the open forest. It has some value as a fodder, but is not particularly productive. It appears very resistant to drought and heavy grazing. The species has a number of variant types recorded throughout its range.

## REFERENCES

Blake (1944b),<sup>1</sup> pp. 4-18; Gardner (1952),<sup>2</sup> pp. 320-23; Vickery (1961),<sup>3</sup> pp. 33-35; Lazarides (1970),<sup>4</sup> pp. 89-93; Black (1978),<sup>5</sup> pp. 240-41; Jessop (1981),<sup>6</sup> pp. 491-92.

## KEY TO SPECIES

1. Plants stoloniferous. Awns inconspicuous or lacking, less than 7 mm long (Mackie's pest) *C. aciculatus*<sup>1</sup>  
Plants not stoloniferous. Awns more than 17 mm long. 2
2. Racemes 2-jointed (sometimes 1 or 3). Leaf sheaths persistent. Southeast. *C. sylvaticus*<sup>1,3</sup>  
Racemes 1-jointed (rarely 2). Leaf sheaths disintegrating into fibres. 3
3. Column of awn 8-15 mm long. Widespread (golden beard-grass) *C. fallax*<sup>1,2,3,4,5,6</sup>  
Column of awn 16-31 mm long. Northwestern (ribbon grass or golden beardgrass) *C. pallidus*<sup>1,2,4,6</sup>