



CYNODON DACTYLON

Green Couch

A strongly stoloniferous perennial, which roots readily and is often profusely branched at the nodes and developing there also leafy shoots and flowering culms; scaly rhizomes also contribute to the mat-forming characteristics of this grass. *Culms* erect or kneeled at the base, up to 30 cm high, slender, not branched. *Nodes* hairless. *Leaves* on the culms, often tufted at the rooted nodes. *Leaf sheaths* slightly keeled to rounded, short, hairless. *Ligule* a dense row of short hairs with a tuft of longer hairs at either end. *Leaf blades* broadest at the base, pointed, 2–15 cm long, 2–4 mm wide, flat or folded, spreading, minutely rough downwards, greyish-green or green, loosely short-haired or hairless.

Inflorescence of 2–6 slender spikes, 2–5 cm long, 1–1.5 mm wide, straight or slightly curved, arranged digitately, usually in 1 whorl, green to purplish. *Spikelets* (S) sessile, borne in 2 rows on the underside of and adpressed to the axis, overlapping, fairly broad, pointed, asymmetrical, much compressed, about 2 mm long, breaking up at maturity above the glumes. *Floret* 1, bisexual, rhachilla always prolonged and a second floret often partly formed. *Glumes* (G_1 , G_2) more or less persistent, equal or slightly unequal, about $\frac{2}{3}$ the length of the spikelet, membranous, 1-nerved. *Lemma* (L) as long as the spikelet, boat-shaped, bluntly pointed, rarely with a minute awn, keeled, 3-nerved, densely and minutely hairy on the keel and often near the margins. *Palea* (P) about as long as the lemma, 2-keeled. *Anthers* 3, up to 1.5 mm long.

This grass is distributed over most of Australia. Possibly originating in Africa, it is now widespread throughout the tropics, subtropics and warm, temperate regions. It is extensively cultivated as a lawn grass and as a pasture grass in some areas. It is moderately drought-tolerant, but rapidly browns off following frosting. It commonly appears as a dominant species after continuous, heavy grazing of native pasture on soils of moderate fertility and, owing to its underground rhizomes, it is very persistent. The other species are seldom encountered. *C. plectostachyus* (African stargrass) is used as a pasture grass to some extent, while *C. transvaalensis* has been used as a turf grass.

REFERENCES

Bailey (1902),¹ p. 1893; Gardner (1952),² p. 216; Chippindall (1955),³ p. 198; Commonwealth Bureau of Pastures and Field Crops (1969c);⁴ Burbidge and Gray (1970),⁵ p. 60; De Wet and Harlan (1970);⁶ Willis (1970),⁷ pp. 164–65; Beadle *et al.* (1972),⁸ p. 646; Lazarides (1972),⁹ pp. 35–41; Black (1978),¹⁰ p. 206; Jessop (1981),¹¹ pp. 465–66.

KEY TO SPECIES

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| 1. Plants with well-developed rhizomes and slender stolons (green couch) | <i>C. dactylon</i> ^{1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11} |
| Plants with stolons but no rhizomes. | 2 |
| 2. Stolons stout and wire-like; plants loose and open, up to 60 cm high. Racemes up to 8 cm long. | <i>C. nlemfuensis</i> ⁶ |
| Stolons slender, plants less than 15 cm tall. Racemes 2–4 cm long (blue couch) | <i>C. incompletus</i> ^{3,6,7,9} |