



X5.4



DACTYLOCTENIUM RADULANS

Button Grass

A short annual with spreading branches, often almost prostrate, rarely erect. *Culms* smooth, hairless, rather slender, angular and striate, branched at the nodes. *Nodes* obvious, exerted from the sheaths, smooth. *Leaves* mostly on the culms. *Leaf sheaths* loose, slightly keeled, striate, not usually hairy. *Ligule* short, membranous, with a shortly hairy margin. *Leaf blades* flat, about 3–4 mm wide at the base, tapering gradually to a point, short (about 8 cm long), usually with long, erect, tubercle-based hairs along the margins of the lower part.

Inflorescence of 3–10 short spikes, 5–10 mm long, arranged in a tight whorl at the top of the culm, the rhachis of the spikes flattened, produced into a short point beyond the 2 close rows of alternately arranged, closely packed, sessile spikelets, disarticulating above the glumes at maturity. *Spikelets* (S) 5 mm long halfway along the spike, tending to be longer and sometimes with more florets than the spikelets towards the top and base of the spike. *Florets* 2–4 (usually 3), bisexual, all similar, except the uppermost one, which is smaller, narrower and pointed. *Glumes* (G_1 , G_2) dissimilar; the lower glume (G_1) about 2 mm long, 1-nerved and strongly keeled, membranous, except along the thickened keel, which is rough down the back; the upper (G_2) longer (2.5 mm), broader, membranous, 1-nerved and strongly keeled, the nerve produced into a short stout awn about 1–1.5 mm long. *Lemmas* (L) very broad towards the base, 1-nerved, strongly keeled, the nerve produced into a short (0.5 mm) awn, slightly rough down the back of the keel. *Paleas* (P) 2-nerved, strongly 2-keeled, rough along the backs of the keels, membranous. *Anthers* 3, 0.5 mm long.

This is a valuable ephemeral grass of the drier inland areas. In these areas, the plants and the mature fallen inflorescences are readily eaten by stock, particularly sheep. It is also a weed of garden and cultivated areas and roadsides in much of southern Queensland.

D. australe is a promising, though rarely grown lawn grass, particularly suited to shaded situations.

REFERENCES

Bailey (1902),¹ p. 1898 (included in *Eleusine aegyptiaca*); Gardner (1952),² p. 210; Chippindall (1955),³ p. 131; Lazarides (1970),⁴ p. 98; Willis (1970),⁵ pp. 157–58; Beadle *et al.* (1972),⁶ p. 644; Black (1978),⁷ pp. 187–88; Jessop (1981),⁸ pp. 462–63.

KEY TO SPECIES

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| 1 | Vigourously stoloniferous perennial (sweet smother grass)
Tufted annuals, sometimes rooting from lower nodes. | <i>D. australe</i> ³
2 |
| 2. | Spikes 5–9 cm long.
Spikes less than 5 cm long. | <i>D. giganteum</i> ³
3 |
| 3. | Spikes 0.5–1.5 cm long; spikelets 5 mm long. Sub-coastal
and inland (button grass)
Spikes 1–5 cm long; spikelets 2.5–3 mm long. Mainly
coastal (coast button grass) | <i>D. radulans</i> ^{1,2,4,5,6,7,8}
<i>D. aegyptium</i> ^{1,3,7} |