



X5.5

ERAGROSTIS TENUIFOLIA

Elastic Grass (A Love Grass)

Annual or short-lived perennial, tufted, erect, up to 70 cm tall. *Culms* with few nodes, smooth, hairless, unbranched. *Nodes* slightly enlarged, hairless. *Leaves* mostly basal. *Leaf sheaths* loose, somewhat keeled, striate, smooth, more or less sparsely covered with short, soft hairs, the margins below the ligule densely fringed with short hairs, the internodes not always exceeding the sheaths at flowering. *Ligule* a narrow rim of short hairs, densely tufted with long, silky hairs on either side and behind the ligule. *Leaf blades* narrow, flat, but becoming rolled in older leaves, up to 30 cm long and 2 mm wide, smooth and hairless, the veins prominent.

Inflorescence an open, stiff, erect, pyramid-shaped panicle, up to 20 cm long; at maturity, the primary branches standing at right angles to the axis and then the secondary branches at right angles to the primary ones, all branches with a prominent tuft of hairs in the axil of each joint, the spikelets borne singly on the secondary branches, which are about 1 cm long. *Spikelets* (S) 8–12 mm long, flattened, but not strongly furrowed, olive-grey in colour, the florets not closely overlapping; at maturity, the spikelet with a saw-toothed outline, due to the lemmas being somewhat spreading, breaking up at maturity above the glumes and between the florets, usually leaving 2 rows of recurved, round-tipped paleas. *Florets* up to 10, similar, bisexual, loosely overlapping, greatly exceeding the glumes. *Glumes* (G₁, G₂) very dissimilar, membranous, faintly 1-nerved, rather ragged along the margin, deciduous; the lower glume (G₁) about 0.5 mm, pointed; the upper (G₂) 1 mm, ragged. *Lemmas* (L) about 2 mm long, 3-nerved, the 2 lateral nerves short and not prominent, 1-keeled, membranous. *Paleas* (P) slightly shorter than the lemmas, 2-nerved, 2-keeled, flat on the back between the keels, longitudinally somewhat concave, persisting for some time after the lemmas have dropped. *Anthers* 3, 0.5 mm long.

A grass of waste places and weed of cultivated areas, it is common in eastern Queensland. The species is naturalized from India to northeastern Africa. There are a large number of species of *Eragrostis*, both native and introduced, found in southern Queensland, but the exact delimitation of some of these is not entirely clear. Mostly they are weed species of limited forage value, often occupying poor infertile sites.

REFERENCES

- Bailey (1902),¹ pp. 1902-8; Domin (1915);² Blake (1948b),³ pp. 153-56; Hitchcock (1950),⁴ pp. 140-69; Vickery (1950b),⁵ p. 338; Gardner (1952),⁶ pp. 113-28; Chippindall (1955),⁷ pp. 132-84; Bor (1960),⁸ pp. 495-516; Burbidge and Gray (1970),⁹ pp. 32-33; Lazarides (1970),¹⁰ pp. 127-48; Willis (1970),¹¹ pp. 158-62; Beadle *et al.* (1972),¹² pp. 642-43; Black (1978),¹³ pp. 191-200; Jessop (1981),¹⁴ pp. 456-60; Simon (1982).¹⁵

KEY TO SPECIES

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Mature spikelets 1-3 mm long.
Mature spikelets usually longer than 3 mm. | 2
5 |
| 2. Panicle open, with spreading branches.
Panicle spike-like, branches erect. | 3
4 |
| 3. Palea with minutely hairy margins, auricles hairy. Rare, northern.
Palea margins without hairs, auricles not hairy. Widespread. | <i>E. tenella</i> ⁸
<i>E. tenellula</i> ⁸ |
| 4. Spikelets 2-3 mm long, 4-9-flowered, perennial.
Spikelets 1 mm long, 3-5 flowered, annual (smallflower lovegrass) | <i>E. confertiflora</i> ^{3,10,13,14}
<i>E. kennedyae</i> ^{3,6,10,13,14} |
| 5. Spikelets up to 7 mm wide.
Spikelets less than 5 mm wide. | <i>E. superba</i> ^{7,8}
6 |
| 6. Pedicels of spikelets encircled by yellow bands (paddock lovegrass)
No yellow bands on pedicels. | <i>E. leptostachya</i> ^{2,12}
7 |
| 7. Leaves with tuberculate glands along margins.
Leaves without tuberculate glands along margins. | 8
9 |
| 8. Spikelets 2-4 mm wide, pedicel with a pitted gland. Weed in waste places (stinkgrass)
Spikelets 1-2 mm wide, pedicels without a pitted gland. Not common (smaller stinkgrass) | <i>E. cilianensis</i> ^{4,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,}
<i>E. minor</i> ^{2,7,8}
(<i>poooides</i>) |
| 9. Spikelets almost cylindrical.
Spikelets more or less laterally compressed. | 10
13 |
| 10. Lemma with lateral nerves closer to margin than mid-nerve; inflorescence about ½ height of plant; grain laterally compressed. Widespread (purple lovegrass)
Lemma with lateral nerves midway between margin and mid-nerve; inflorescence about ⅓ plant height; grain dorsally compressed. Western. | <i>E. lacunaria</i> ^{1,3,10,11,13,14}
11 |
| 11. Spikelets distinctly pedicelled. Perennial (sickle lovegrass)
Most spikelets sessile or subsessile. Usually annual. | <i>E. falcata</i> ^{1,2,3,6,10,13,14}
12 |
| 12. Lemmas 1.75-2.5 mm long. Plants prostrate (mallee lovegrass)
Lemmas 1.5-1.6 mm long. Plants semi-erect to erect. | <i>E. dielsii</i> ^{1,2,3,6,10,13,14}
<i>E. pergracilis</i> ^{3,14} |
| 13. Robust cane-like perennial up to 3 m tall; culms obviously branched; branches single or in clusters at most nodes (canegrass)
Perennials or annuals, not cane-like, mostly less than 1 m tall, branching not obvious. | <i>E. australasica</i> ^{6,11,13,14}
14 |
| 14. Perennials with rhizomes, conspicuously swollen butts or enlarged stem bases.
Annuals or slender perennials without thickened butts. | 15
20 |
| 15. Spikelets dark olive-grey. Plants without rhizomes; leaves and inflorescence more or less weeping. Eastern (African lovegrass) | <i>E. curvula</i> ^{4,6,7,8,12,13,14} |

- Spikelets pale or purplish. Plants with or without rhizomes.
Inflorescence erect. Western. 16
16. Rhizome butt woolly. 17
Rhizome butt hairless or with sparse hairs. 19
17. Spikelets hairy along central furrow (woollybutt grass) *E. laniflora*^{2,10,13,14}
Spikelets hairless. 18
18. Spikelets about 1.5 mm wide. *E. desertorum*^{2,6}
Spikelets at least 2 mm wide (woollybutt grass) *E. eriopoda*^{1,2,6,10,13,14}
19. Leaf blades flat, recurved; rhizome well developed and knotty (knottybutt grass) *E. xerophila*^{2,3,6,10,13,14}
Leaf blades unrolled, erect; rhizome short and not knotty (neverfail grass) *E. setifolia*^{2,6,10,11,13,14}
20. Palea less than ½ lemma length. *E. speciosa*^{1,2,6,10,13,14}
Palea more than ½ lemma length. 21
21. Spikelets furrowed down the mid-line, more or less closely overlapping. 22
Spikelets not furrowed, loosely overlapping, usually olive-green in colour; lateral nerves on lemma indistinct. 34
22. Lateral nerve on lemma indistinct; spikelets olive-green in colour. *E. molybdea*^{5,12}
Lateral nerve distinct; spikelets greenish, purplish or straw-coloured. 23
23. Palea edged with a row of teeth. Western. *E. basedowii*^{3,6,13,14}
Palea not edged with teeth, but sometimes with short hairs. 24
24. Lemma 2.5-4 mm long. 25
Lemma less than 2.5 mm long. 27
25. Branches of panicles hairy close to axils. *E. pubescens*²
Branches of panicles hairless. 26
26. Spikelets more than 3 mm wide; lemmas more than 3.5 mm long. *E. concinna*^{1,2}
Spikelets less than 3 mm wide; lemmas less than 3 mm long. Coastal. *E. interrupta*^{1,2,6}
27. Spikelets oval to triangular, less than twice as long as wide; paleas deciduous with lemmas. *E. unioloides*^{4,8}
Spikelets more or less parallel-sided, usually more than twice as long as wide; paleas usually not deciduous with lemmas. 28
28. Annual; inflorescence usually comprising more than ½ plant. North-eastern. *E. cumingii*^{8,10,14}
Perennial; inflorescence comprising less than ½ of plant. 29
29. Lateral spikelets sessile on pedicels 0.1-0.5 mm long. 30
At least some lateral spikelets on pedicels more than 0.5 and up to 7 mm long. 31
30. Inflorescence open; spikelets not clustered in bunches. *E. sterilis*
Inflorescence with spikelets clustered in bunches. 32
31. Spikelets 1.5-2 mm wide, 6-14-flowered. Widespread *E. elongata*^{2,6,10,11,12,13,14}
(clustered lovegrass) *E. sororia*²
Spikelets 2.2-3 mm wide, 16-36-flowered.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 32. Spikelets more or less adpressed to primary branches.
Spikelets not adpressed to primary branches; spreading. | <i>E. spartinoides</i>
33 |
| 33. Inflorescence 10–15 cm long, branches not weeping; spikelets 2–2.5 mm wide (Brown's lovegrass)
Inflorescence 10–40 cm long, branches often weeping; spikelets 1.5–2 mm wide. | <i>E. brownii</i> ^{1,6,11,12,13}
<i>E. benthamii</i> ^a |
| 34. Seed at maturity round, obviously ridged in a reticulate pattern and deep red.
Seed not round at maturity, not or indistinctly ridged, brown or reddish-brown. | <i>E. trachycarpa</i> ^{2,9,11,12}
35 |
| 35. Inflorescence a contracted panicle.
Inflorescence an open panicle. | <i>E. megalosperma</i> ^{1,2}
36 |
| 36. Lower panicle branches whorled.
Panicle branches not whorled. | 37
39 |
| 37. Palea deciduous with or shortly after lemma (drooping lovegrass)
Palea persistent. | <i>E. leptocarpa</i> ^{1,2,6,10,13,14}
38 |
| 38. Tuft of hairs at lower panicle node (soft lovegrass)
Not hairy at lower panicle node (weeping lovegrass) | <i>E. pilosa</i> ^{1,2,4,7,8}
<i>E. parviflora</i> ^{6,9,10,11,12,13,14} |
| 39. Spikelets densely arranged along spreading primary panicle branches.
Spikelets not densely arranged along primary panicle branches. | <i>E. microcarpa</i> ^{5,14}
40 |
| 40. Tuft of hairs present at all panicle nodes (elastic grass)
Panicle nodes without hairs. | <i>E. tenuifolia</i> ⁸
41 |
| 41. Panicles more or less weeping.
Panicles erect. | <i>E. bahiensis</i> ⁵
<i>E. longipedicellata</i> ¹⁵ |