



X2.6



FESTUCA ARUNDINACEA

Tall Fescue

A tufted perennial, 50–180 cm tall, sometimes forming dense, strong tussocks. *Culms* mostly erect, often quite stout and strong, unbranched, smooth or slightly rough in the upper part. *Nodes* 2–5, pigmented, smooth. *Leaves* green, predominantly basal, but also on the culms. *Leaf sheaths* rounded on the back, usually smooth, striate, shorter than the internodes, with 2 small, clasping, minutely hairy auricles or ears at the junction of the leaf blade. Ligule a membranous rim up to 2 mm long. *Leaf blades* flat, long and gradually tapering to a fine tip, 10–60 cm long, 3–12 mm wide, fairly stiff and rough down the margins.

Inflorescence a narrowish panicle, erect or nodding, 10–50 cm long, green, often tinged with purple, becoming straw-coloured, the axis and branches rough downwards, the branches angular, rather slender, somewhat spreading, sparingly branched in the upper $\frac{2}{3}$, the branches bearing 1 to several spikelets on slender pedicels of varying lengths. *Spikelets* (S) all alike, more or less elliptic, 10–18 mm long, breaking up at maturity and falling free of the persistent glumes. *Florets* 3–10, mostly bisexual. *Glumes* (G_1 , G_2) equal or slightly unequal, about $\frac{1}{2}$ the length of the floret, membranous, except in the mid-vein area, triangularly tapering to a fine point from the base, faintly 3-nerved, the lateral nerves very short, slightly keeled on the back; the lower glume (G_1) slightly narrower than the upper (G_2). *Lemmas* (L) about 10 mm long, somewhat elliptical and tapering to a fine point from the middle, the tip pointed or the mid-nerve extended into a short, subterminal, 1–4 mm awn, faintly 5-nerved, membranous, though slightly thickened about the nerves, flattish to rounded on the back with the margins infolded at the slightly keeled lateral nerves. *Paleas* (P) slightly shorter than the lemmas, elliptical, 2-nerved, 2-keeled, flat to slightly concave and membranous on the back between the downwardly rough and thickened keels. *Anthers* 3, 3–4 mm long, yellow.

This is an introduced temperate zone grass, which may be found wild or cultivated. In southeast Queensland, it is occasionally encountered in the cool border zone as a tufted wild grass in damp places. It also sometimes is cultivated as a winter pasture in areas of reliable winter rain or irrigation availability. In pastures, it does not become as strongly tufted as when growing wild.

REFERENCES

Willis (1970), p. 103; Beadle *et al.* (1972), p. 633; Black (1978), p. 146.

KEY TO SPECIES

This is the only species occurring in southern Queensland.