



# *IMPERATA CYLINDRICA* var. *MAJOR*

## Blady Grass

A tufted perennial, with stiff, erect leaves, strongly rhizomatous with stout, scaly, underground shoots. *Culms* 10–120 cm tall, slender, erect, smooth and hairless, unbranched. *Nodes* 1–3, usually with a ring of silky hairs. *Leaves* basal. *Leaf sheaths* rounded, sometimes loosely hairy in the upper part or at the nodes, where the silky hairs may be up to 10 mm long, often persisting as a fibrous mass at the base. *Ligule* insignificant, truncate, 0.5 mm long, with a tuft of silky hairs at either margin. *Leaf blades* rigid, flat, erect, 3–100 cm long, 2–20 mm wide, narrow, with prominent mid-rib, the margins very rough with tiny teeth, tapering gradually to a point, often exceeding the culm in length.

*Inflorescence* a cylindrical, spike-like panicle, 3–20 cm long, 0.6–2.5 cm wide, fluffy in appearance due to the long silky hairs concealing the spikelets. *Spikelets* (S) 3–4 mm long, all alike, in pairs, on unequal pedicels from a slender continuous axis and disarticulating and falling entire at maturity, enveloped by long, white hairs 9–15 mm long. *Florets* 2, the lower neuter and reduced to a lemma, the upper bisexual. *Glumes* ( $G_1$ ,  $G_2$ ) almost equal, membranous; the lower ( $G_1$ ) 5-nerved; the upper ( $G_2$ ) 3-nerved, the nerves not extending to the upper part, which is thinly membranous; long, silky hairs arise from the bases and backs of both glumes. *Lemma* ( $L_1$ ) of the lower sterile floret thinly membranous, without nerves, about  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{2}{3}$  the length of the glumes, tapering to a blunt point or ragged. *Palea* absent. *Lemma* ( $L_2$ ) of the upper fertile floret slightly shorter, rounded or ragged at the tip, nerveless and thinly membranous. *Palea* ( $P_2$ ) membranous, without nerves or keels and raggedly truncate. *Anthems* 2, sometimes 3, 2–3 mm long.

This grass is commonly encountered throughout coastal Queensland and northern New South Wales where the annual rainfall exceeds 1000–1500 mm. It becomes a weed of pastures with their decline in fertility following forest clearing, and of open forest and roadsides. It is eaten by stock only in its young stage of growth; the burning that is practised to achieve this condition promotes its further dominance. It can be eradicated by repeated mowing, cultivation, or improving the fertility by fertilizing and seeding with vigorous pasture species, particularly clover and other legumes.

### REFERENCES

Bailey (1902), p. 1851 (as *I. arundinacea*); Hubbard (1944); Gardner (1952), pp. 312–14; Vickery (1961), p. 24; Burbidge and Gray (1970), p. 70; Willis (1970), p. 208; Beadle *et al.* (1972), p. 674; Black (1978), pp. 245–46; Commonwealth Bureau of Pastures and Field Crops (1979).

### KEY TO SPECIES

Only one species occurs in southern Queensland.