



## ISCHAEMUM AUSTRALE

A tufted or weakly rhizomatous perennial, with few to many culms, up to 1.5 m tall. *Culms* erect, leafy, hairless, branched usually at the lower nodes, rarely above. *Nodes* with a rim of short hairs. *Leaves* mostly on the culms. *Leaf sheaths* rather long and loose, 10–15 cm long and 3–5 mm wide, smooth and striate or occasionally slightly hairy, persistent at the base. *Ligule* a stiff flap narrowing upwards, up to 3 mm long, the margins of the sheath flanking the ligule, hairy. *Leaf blades* flat, up to 5 mm wide and 20 cm long, hairless and smooth, pointed at the tip and slightly narrowed towards the ligule.

*Inflorescence* spike-like, but composed of 2 erect, closely adpressed, spike-like racemes 3–10 cm long, one usually shorter than the other. *Spikelets* (S) 6–7 mm long, all similar, one sessile (S<sub>1</sub>), the other pedicellate (S<sub>2</sub>), more or less flattened on the back, closely adpressed and alternate on one side of a flattened zig-zag axis; when fresh and immature, the spikelets closed and the outline smooth, while at maturity they open (as illustrated); the jointed triangular axis carries a row of stiff bristles along each lateral edge, terminating in a ring of shorter bristles about it at the base of each spikelet pair; the racemes break up at maturity with the spikelets falling entire. *Florets* 2, the lower floret male, the upper floret bisexual or sometimes male in the pedicellate spikelet. *Glumes* (G<sub>1</sub>, G<sub>2</sub>) quite dissimilar in shape, but both the length of the spikelet; the lower glume (G<sub>1</sub>) very asymmetrical, 2-keeled, the margins folded in, winged on the keel, tough, with numerous nerves and many cross-joints; the upper (G<sub>2</sub>) not markedly asymmetrical, 5–7-nerved, 1-keeled, tough, shining, rough down the back of the keel. *Lemma* (L<sub>1</sub>) of the lower floret membranous, slightly shorter than the glumes, 1- or 3-nerved. *Palea* (P<sub>1</sub>) finely membranous, particularly the large marginal flaps, 2-keeled. *Anthers* 3, 2.5 mm long. *Lemma* (L<sub>2</sub>) of the upper floret slightly shorter, often with a short awn, particularly in the sessile spikelet, 1- or faintly 3-nerved, that of the sessile spikelet with a membranous marginal flap divided at its tip. *Palea* (P<sub>2</sub>) similar to P<sub>1</sub>. *Anthers* 3, 3.5 mm long.

This grass is largely coastal or subcoastal in distribution and appears mainly to be confined to poor sandy soils. It is common in the coastal lowland cleared forest areas. It is palatable to stock, though not highly productive. The species *I. triticeum* may be used as a sand binding grass.

### REFERENCES

Bentham (1878),<sup>1</sup> pp. 518–22; Bailey (1902),<sup>2</sup> p. 1854; Hubbard (1935b);<sup>3</sup> Gardner (1952),<sup>4</sup> pp. 298–301; Vickery (1961),<sup>5</sup> p. 20.

### KEY TO SPECIES

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| 1. Lower glume of sessile spikelet transversely ridged.  | <i>I. rugosum</i> |
| Lower glume of sessile spikelet not transversely ridged. | 2                 |

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| 2. | Raceme solitary. Lower glume of sessile spikelet with broad wings at apex. Slender perennial.<br>Racemes 2 or more. Lower glume of sessile spikelet with narrow wings at apex. Robust perennials. | <i>I. fragile</i> <sup>1,2</sup><br>3                                     |
| 3. | Rhachis, internodes and pedicels of inflorescence densely hairy. Leaves and sheaths more or less hairy.<br>Rhachis, internodes and pedicels slightly or not hairy. Leaves and sheaths not hairy.  | <i>I. villosum</i> <sup>1</sup><br>4                                      |
| 4. | Nodes bearded. Leaves 3-5 mm broad. Erect, relatively slender grass.<br>Nodes without hairs. Leaves 6-12 mm broad. Decumbent, trailing grass, usually coastal.                                    | <i>I. australe</i> <sup>1,3,4</sup><br><i>I. triticeum</i> <sup>1,5</sup> |