



**G<sub>1</sub>** **G<sub>2</sub>** **L<sub>1</sub>** **L<sub>2</sub>** **P<sub>2</sub>**  
**X6.0**

## *MELINIS MINUTIFLORA*

### Molasses Grass

Perennial, with culms ascending up to 1 m from a trailing, much-tangled mat of branched stems near the ground, rooting at the nodes, the foliage densely covered with sticky hairs, which emit an odour of molasses. *Culms* hairless and smooth, not sticky, more or less erect from the decumbent base, branched at the nodes. *Nodes* densely clothed in long, silky hairs. *Leaves* mostly on the culms. *Leaf sheaths* rounded, becoming loose with age, densely clothed in short, sticky hairs, generally almost as long as the internodes. *Ligule* a rim of short hairs. *Leaf blades* densely clothed on both surfaces with short, sticky hairs, short in the upper part of the culm, but longer towards the base and on vegetative shoots, 5–15 cm long, 5–10 mm wide, tapering from near the base to a point.

*Inflorescence* a somewhat narrow, pyramidal panicle, at first with the branches erect and close, but at maturity, open with the branches semi-erect, the branches arranged in clusters of several along either side of the 1–20 cm axis. *Spikelets* (S) all alike, 2 mm long, variously pedicelled and borne singly on primary or secondary branches, disarticulating below the glumes and falling entire at maturity. *Florets* 2, the lower neuter and reduced to a lemma, the upper bisexual. *Glumes* ( $G_1$ ,  $G_2$ ) very dissimilar; the lower glume ( $G_1$ ) reduced to a minute scale; the upper ( $G_2$ ) the length of the spikelet, 7-nerved, slightly 2-lobed at the apex with a short point extending from the mid-nerve in the middle, membranous, deeply purple-coloured. *Lemma* ( $L_1$ ) of the lower sterile floret similar to  $G_2$ , 5-nerved, 2-lobed, but with a long awn (3–10 mm) extending from the mid-nerve, also purple-coloured. *Palea* absent. *Lemma* ( $L_2$ ) of the upper fertile floret thinly membranous, transparent, slightly notched at the apex, faintly 3-nerved, slightly keeled, almost the length of the spikelet. *Palea* ( $P_2$ ) similar, faintly 2-nerved. *Anthers* 3, 1.5 mm long.

This introduced African grass is both cultivated and naturalized in the high rainfall coastal and subcoastal country of Queensland. It frequently is used as a pioneer grass on newly cleared country because of its weed smothering and soil conservation characteristics resulting from the dense mat of stems at the ground surface.

It is highly palatable to stock and appears to combine well with some of the twining types of tropical legumes. In dry weather, it may be easily set on fire, to which it is adversely sensitive. It flowers late in the season and hence provides a long period of vegetative growth.

#### REFERENCES

Gardner (1952), pp. 274-76; Barnard (1969), pp. 41-43; Vickery (1975), p. 271.

#### KEY TO SPECIES

This is the only species of this exotic genus in southern Queensland.