



MONACHATHER PARADOXA

Bandicoot Grass or Mulga Oats

A stiffly erect, tufted perennial up to 70 cm tall. *Culms* erect, smooth, hairless, branching from the more or less swollen, bulbous base of the plant, which is characteristically covered with scale-like sheaths with dense, woolly hairs. *Nodes* 2-3, dark-pigmented at maturity, smooth, hairless. *Leaves* mainly basal, dark green to olive-green. *Leaf sheaths* tight, shorter than the internodes, hairless to hairy with long white hairs, occasionally purplish. *Ligule* a jagged membranous rim 1-3 mm long, bordered by dense tufts of white hairs. *Leaf blades* 7-12 cm long and 13 mm wide, flat, striate, slightly rough on the surface with scattered long, white, tubercle-based hairs, firm, tapering gradually to a fine point.

Inflorescence a reduced, almost spike-like panicle 5-15 cm long and 2 cm wide. *Spikelets* (S) relatively few, not crowded, erect and single on the erect and contracted panicle branches, 8-17 mm long, gaping towards maturity to show numerous florets and a mass of long, white, silky hairs, breaking up at maturity above the persistent glumes. *Florets* usually 5-6, all more or less similar, bisexual. *Glumes* (G_1 , G_2) almost equal, the length of the spikelet, 11-13-nerved, rather broad, rounded on the back, smooth or slightly rough on the back, hairless. *Lemmas* (L) slightly shorter than the glumes, deeply divided to below the middle into two sharply pointed lobes, a short awn arising centrally between and shorter than the lobes; the body of the lemma about 2 mm long, firm and shining, 9-nerved, 2 bands of dense, long, white to brownish hairs arising transversely across the back. *Paleas* (P) almost pear-shaped, slightly exceeding the body of the lemmas, concave, hardened, nerveless and without keels. *Anthers* 3, 0.3 mm long, yellow.

This is a widespread and common grass of the southwestern drier zone, where it is a valued native forage grass. It is a common understorey grass of the mulga (*Acacia aneura*) woodlands and hence is called Mulga oats.

REFERENCES

Gardner (1952), p. 56; Willis (1970), p. 169; Lazarides (1970), p. 100-101 (as *Danthonia bipartita*); Blake (1972b), pp. 1-4; Black (1978), p. 124; Jessop (1981), pp. 439-40.

KEY TO SPECIES

This is the only species of the genus occurring in southern Queensland.