



OPHIUROS MEGAPHYLLUS

Canegrass

A tall, somewhat clumped, erect perennial. *Culms* up to 2.5 m tall, arising from a short, stout, scaly, rhizomatous base, stiff and cane-like, smooth, branching from the upper nodes. *Nodes* 3–4, smooth, purple-pigmented, the internodes longer than the sheaths. *Leaves* mostly on the culms, those at the base becoming scale-like. *Leaf sheaths* loose, smooth, striate, persistent near the base. *Ligule* a rim of short hairs. *Leaf blades* inrolled, becoming flat, fairly stiff, striate, up to 60 cm long and 10–15 mm broad, tapering gradually from the base to a fine point, smooth though slightly rough down the margins and mid-rib on the back, some longer curved hairs on the margin at the slightly expanded base.

Inflorescence a fasciculate panicle of slender racemes, each subtended by a short spathe and the whole partly enclosed by a spathe-like leaf sheath, terminal or arising from the axils of the upper nodes. *Spikelets* (S) all similar, the single spikelet sessile and sunk in the axis of the raceme, at maturity falling together with the disarticulating joints of the raceme, 3–4 mm long. *Florets* 2, the lower male or occasionally bisexual, the upper bisexual. *Glumes* (G_1 , G_2) very dissimilar; the lower (G_1) the length of the spikelet, thickened and rigid with 5 rows of pits on the back, 5–7-nerved, the margins slightly clasping at the top; the upper (G_2) slightly shorter than G_1 , embedded in the rachis joint of the raceme, very rounded and smooth on the back, not rigid, 3-nerved, the margins clasping in the upper part. *Lemmas* (L_1 , L_2) somewhat dissimilar, membranous; L_1 broad and rounded, almost the length of the spikelet, 3-nerved; L_2 narrower, about $\frac{3}{4}$ the length of L_1 , faintly 3-nerved to nerveless, oblong. *Paleas* (P_1 , P_2) unequal, membranous; P_1 slightly shorter than L_1 , 2-keeled; P_2 about $\frac{3}{4}$ the length of L_2 , narrow and oblong, faintly 2-keeled. *Anthers* 3 in the lower floret, 1.5 mm long, yellow; 3 in the upper floret, 2 mm long, purple.

The grass is found mostly on clay soils in both the plains and woodlands of the northern region. It may become locally abundant in moist depressions. Resembling *Rottboellia* spp., it differs in the absence of pedicellate spikelets in the inflorescence.

REFERENCES

Bailey (1902), p. 1860 (as *O. corymbosus*); Gardner (1952), pp. 310–13 (as *O. exaltatus*).

KEY TO SPECIES

Only this one species occurs in Australia.