



OPLISMENUS AEMULUS

A weak, scrambling perennial. *Culms* mostly trailing, leafy, smooth, freely branching, up to 50 cm tall, rooting at the nodes when in contact with the ground. *Nodes* numerous along the trailing stems, hairy. *Leaves* on the culms. *Leaf sheaths* loose, striate, hairy, shorter than the internodes. *Ligule* membranous with a rim of hairs, a tuft of hairs on each margin. *Leaf blades* flat, contracted towards the ligule, up to 8 mm wide and then tapering to a point, the surface undulating, sparsely covered with silky hairs on both surfaces.

Inflorescence a narrow panicle of short, separate and more or less alternately arranged racemes bearing one to a few sessile spikelets, tufts of long, silky hairs at the points of branching and on the pedicels below each spikelet, the branches generally with silky hairs. *Spikelets* (S) alike, about 3 mm long, slightly flattened, disarticulating below the glumes and falling entire at maturity. *Florets* 2, the lower neuter and often reduced to a lemma, the upper bisexual. *Glumes* (G_1 , G_2) slightly unequal, $\frac{2}{3}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ the length of the spikelet, membranous, slightly hairy on the back and along the margins of the upper half; the lower glume (G_1) slightly shorter than the upper (excluding the awn), 3-nerved, the central nerve produced into a stout, straight awn about 7 mm long; the upper (G_2) 5-nerved, the tip slightly produced into a point. *Lemma* (L_1) of the lower sterile floret broad and rounded, the length of the spikelet, 5-nerved, membranous, slightly hairy on the back and margins of the upper part. *Palea* often absent, if present, membranous, nerveless and oblong. *Lemma* (L_2) of the upper fertile floret somewhat hardened, translucent, faintly 3-nerved, enclosing the floret, broadly rounded. *Palea* (P_2) broadly rounded, faintly 2-nerved, equal in length to L_2 . *Anthers* 3, 1 mm long.

The grass is common in shady, moist situations in open forest country and along the margins of rainforest, where it may form a carpet. It is eaten by stock, though obviously is of no great importance as a pasture species.

REFERENCES

Bailey (1902),¹ p. 1837 (as *O. setarius* in part); Domin (1915),² pp. 327–30; Willis (1970),³ p. 195; Beadle *et al.* (1972),⁴ p. 670; Vickery (1975),⁵ pp. 215–19.

KEY TO SPECIES

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| 1. Leaves typically more than 10 times as long as wide, with margins more or less parallel. | 2 |
| Leaves typically less than 7 times as long as wide, with margins curved. | 3 |
| 2. Racemes in distinct clusters. Sterile lemma awned. | <i>O. undulatifolius</i> ^{2,5} |
| Racemes not in distinct clusters. Sterile lemma rarely awned. | <i>O. imbecillus</i> ^{4,5} |
| 3. Basal racemes more than 4 cm long. Northern coastal. | <i>O. compositus</i> ¹ |
| Basal racemes less than 2 cm long. Coastal. | <i>O. aemulus</i> ^{1,2,3,4,5} |