



# PEROTIS RARA

## Comet Grass

A slender annual, 15–35 cm tall. *Culms* erect or kneed at the base, branched only at the base, hairless. *Nodes* hairless, not prominent. *Leaves* mostly on the culm. *Leaf sheaths* rounded, short and loose, hairless, smooth. *Ligule* reduced to a short, hairy rim. *Leaf blades* short, linear, up to 5 cm long and 2–3 mm wide, gradually narrowing to a point from about the middle, hairless, except the margins coarsely hairy and with long hairs at the orifice of the sheath.

*Inflorescence* a feathery raceme, 10–20 cm long, slender, the axis angular. *Spikelets* (S) up to 5 cm long (including the awn), on short stalks, in early maturity erect, but later becoming deflexed progressively until at full maturity they all point downwards; a narrow, conspicuous callus at base, disarticulating below the glumes and falling entire at maturity. *Floret* 1, bisexual. *Glumes* (G<sub>1</sub>, G<sub>2</sub>) 1-nerved, the length of the spikelet, not persistent, slightly unequal, narrow, linear and awned; the lower glume (G<sub>1</sub>) with rough keel and hairy margins, tapering into a fine, rough awn, which is up to 4 times as long as the body of the glume; the upper (G<sub>2</sub>) slightly shorter, otherwise similar. *Lemma* (L) much shorter than the glumes, membranous, 2–4 mm long, 1-nerved, rather blunt, shining. *Palea* (P) about  $\frac{2}{3}$  the length of the lemma, membranous, without nerves. *Anthers* 3, 0.3 mm long.

This grass is widespread in southern Queensland and over much of Australia. It is an ephemeral annual, running rapidly to seed, with little production of herbage and hence of no value as a forage grass. It appears to grow on a variety of soils and particularly where some ground disturbance has occurred.

### REFERENCES

Bailey (1902), p. 1847; Gardner (1952), p. 186; Lazarides (1970), p. 198; Vickery (1975), pp. 303–5; Black (1978), p. 210; Jessop (1981), pp. 469–70.

### KEY TO SPECIES

This is the only species present in southern Queensland.