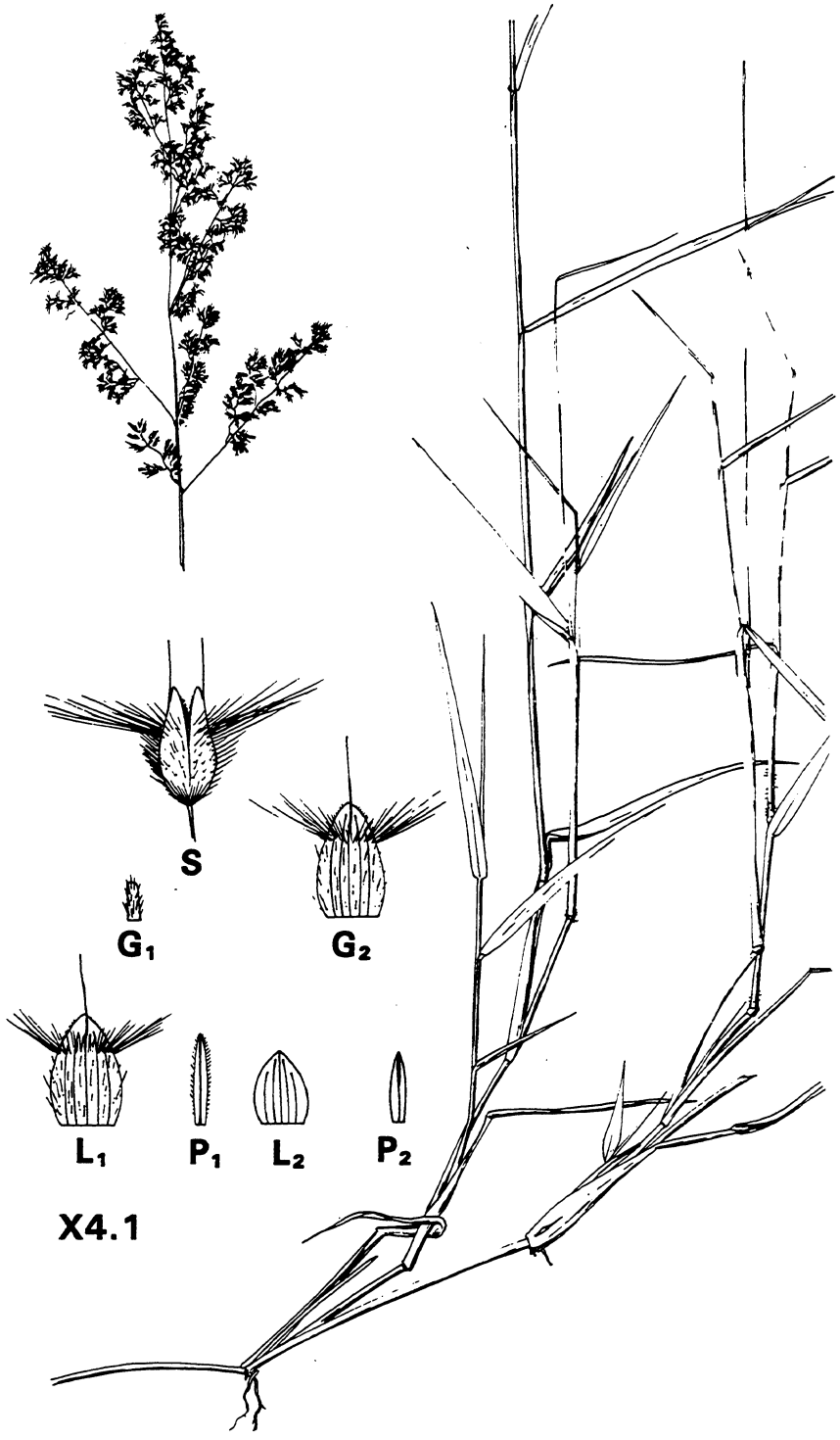
S
G1
G2
L1
P1
L2
P2
X4.1

RHYNCHELYTRUM REPENS
Natal Grass

A tufted, erect, procumbent or weakly stoloniferous perennial, up to 80 cm high. *Culms* smooth and hairless, branched, often kneed towards the base, sometimes rooting at the nodes. *Nodes* covered with dense, short hairs. *Leaves* green or blue-green, mostly on the culms. *Leaf sheaths* usually somewhat hairy, but may be hairless, at maturity shorter than the internodes. *Ligule* a row of prominent hairs. *Leaf blades* flat, about 15 cm long, 4–5 mm wide, tapering gradually to a point, with numerous short hairs on both surfaces.

Inflorescence an open, somewhat lax panicle, up to 15 cm long, of reddish colour, the primary and secondary branches shortly hairy. *Spikelets* (S) about 4 mm long, all similar, borne on unequal but short hairy pedicels and subtended by a tuft of longer hairs, falling entire at maturity. *Florets* 2, the lower male or sterile, the upper bisexual. *Glumes* (G_1, G_2) dissimilar; the lower glume (G_1) minute or absent, when present truncate, covered with long hairs; the upper (G_2) as long as the spikelet, faintly 5-nerved, truncate or bilobed, with a short awn extending from the tip, densely hairy from the base up, the hairs markedly red-pigmented terminally, increasing in length towards the tip. *Lemma* (L_1) of the lower floret like G_2 and also very hairy and awned. *Palea* (P_1) smaller and narrower, membranous, strongly 2-keeled, the keels with a row of bristles down the back. *Anthers*, when present, 3, 0.5 mm long. *Lemma* (L_2) of the upper fertile floret shorter, membranous, faintly 5-nerved, hairless, rounded on the back. *Palea* (P_2) membranous, faintly 2-nerved, rounded on the back. *Anthers* 3, 1–1.5 mm long.

Native of southern Africa, this grass is widely naturalized in eastern Queensland. It is a grass of waste places, such as roadsides etc., and of abandoned cultivation areas. It is eaten by stock when vegetative, but it rapidly goes to seed and is not productive. Readily controlled by cultivation, it does not invade well-managed pastures. Often it will colour local areas of countryside quite red.

REFERENCES

Gardner (1952), p. 274; Vickery (1975), pp. 219–20; Jessop (1981), p. 481.

KEY TO SPECIES

Only one species of this exotic grass is found in Australia.