



SPINIFEX HIRSUTUS

Hairy or Beach Spinifex

A stout perennial grass, up to 30 cm tall, with strong creeping stolons, which root at the nodes; vegetatively similar plants differing in sex, some male and some female or bisexual. *Culms* smooth, hairless below, becoming hairy in the upper part, often tufted from the rooted nodes. *Nodes* almost enclosed by the large, overlapping leaf sheaths. *Leaves* basal or clustered at the leafy nodes. *Leaf sheaths* crowded and persistent at the base of the plant, loose and distinctly longer than the internodes, hairless or hairy. *Ligule* a rim of long, silky hairs. *Leaf blades* inrolled, densely but shortly silky-hairy on the undersides, 7–8 mm broad when flattened, often 30–40 cm long.

Inflorescences (I₁, I₂) of different sex and appearance, borne on different plants. *Male inflorescence* (I₁) a terminal cluster of stalked racemes, often with 1 or a few racemes borne some distance below, each cluster subtended by large, partly enclosing, silky-hairy bracts, the axis of each raceme extending beyond the last spikelet into a stout bristle, which sometimes may be quite long. *Spikelets* (S₁) 6–10 mm long, shortly pedicelled, 7–10 in number. *Florets* 2, both male. *Glumes* (G₁, G₂) almost equal, with the upper glume (G₂) slightly longer, similar, half to almost as long as the spikelet, 5–7-nerved, hairy on the back, particularly along the upper margins. *Lemma* (L₁) of the lower floret slightly longer, 5-nerved, hairless. *Palea* (P₁) slightly shorter, 2-nerved and strongly 2-keeled. *Anthers* 3, 6 mm long. *Lemma* (L₂) of the upper floret about equal to L₁, 3-nerved. *Palea* (P₂) similar to P₁. *Anthers* 3, 6 mm long. *Female bisexual inflorescence* (I₂) a large, globose, spiny head of numerous sessile racemes, each of which is reduced to a single spikelet, which is enclosed by a large, silky-hairy bract, the axis produced beyond the spikelet into a long, stout bristle 10 cm or more in length. *Spikelets* (S₂) 12–16 mm long, falling entire at maturity. *Florets* 2, the lower neuter and reduced to a lemma, the upper female or bisexual. *Glumes* (G₁, G₂) subequal, 16 and 14 mm respectively, many-nerved, silky-hairy on their backs and margins in the upper half. *Lemma* (L₁) of the lower sterile floret 11 mm long, pointed, slightly hairy, 7-nerved. *Palea* absent. *Lemma* (L₂) of the upper fertile floret 8 mm long, 3-nerved, the margins partly enclosing the palea, hairless. *Palea* (P₂) equal to L₂, 2-nerved. *Anthers*, when present, about 1 mm long.

This grass is common the sand-dunes of the coasts of Australia, New Zealand and New Caledonia. It is an effective sand-binder in beach reclamation and protection work due to its vigorous stoloniferous habit, one plant being able to colonize a considerable area.

REFERENCES

Bailey (1902), p. 1835; Gardner (1952), pp. 250–52; Willis (1970), pp. 206–7; Beadle *et al.* (1972), p. 673; Vickery (1975), pp. 269–71; Black (1978), p. 233.

KEY TO SPECIES

Only one species occurs in eastern Queensland.