



# THELLUNGIA ADVENA

## Coolibah Grass

A tufted, robust perennial. *Culms* erect, up to 1.5 m tall, smooth, without hairs, not branched, the sheathed bases overlapping. *Nodes* prominent, hairless. *Leaves* mostly basal. *Leaf sheaths* rather loose but enclosing the culm, generally shorter than the internodes, smooth and shiny, faintly striate, persistent, straw-coloured at maturity. *Ligule* reduced to a minute rim of hairs. *Leaf blades* flat, 2–5 mm wide, up to 30 cm or more long, slightly rough on the upper surface, smooth below, striate, green to blue-green.

*Inflorescence* a spike-like panicle, up to 50 cm or so long, displaying a silvery-straw-coloured sheen in the sun, the primary branches erect and scattered or clustered along the axis, lending for the most part a spike-like appearance, sometimes interrupted in the lower part, the secondary branches short and erect with 1 to several spikelets on each. *Spikelets* (S) all similar, about 4 mm long, almost sessile, disarticulating above the glumes and between the florets at maturity. *Florets* 3–4, all similar and bisexual. *Glumes* ( $G_1$ ,  $G_2$ ) very unequal, membranous, 1-nerved, narrow and pointed; the lower glume ( $G_1$ ) 1–1.5 mm long, about  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{2}{3}$  the length of the upper ( $G_2$ ). *Lemma* (L) similar to  $G_2$ , more strongly keeled. *Palea* (P) about  $\frac{1}{2}$  the length of the lemma, 2-keeled and faintly 2-nerved, pointed. *Anthers* 3, 0.3 mm long.

The grass is locally abundant on black soils of the Darling Downs area and Mitchell grasslands. It is obviously eaten by stock, since it is found mainly in ungrazed areas. It can be distinguished from *Sporobolus elongatus*, to which it sometimes bears a superficial resemblance, by the sheen of the inflorescence, its robustness and spikelet structure, and also by the fact that it is restricted to black soils.

### REFERENCES

Hubbard (1933a); Jessop (1981), p. 463.

### KEY TO SPECIES

Only one species is found, usually on clay soils of the inland region.