



**G<sub>1</sub>**



**G<sub>2</sub>**



**L<sub>1</sub>**



**L<sub>2</sub>**



**P<sub>2</sub>**

**X5.4**



# THYRIDOLEPIS MITCHELLIANA

## Mulga Grass or Mulga Mitchell

A tufted perennial, up to 50 cm tall, the erect culms arising from enlarged, almost bulbous bases, which are densely covered with short hairs. *Culms* may be unbranched or new branches may initiate from the nodes of old culms, especially after dry spells, more or less covered with silky hairs, particularly towards the exertion of the ligule. *Nodes* hairless, often bearing the remnants of branches that have dropped, not prominent. *Leaves* mostly on the culms. *Leaf sheaths* enlarged and scale-like at the base and densely hairy, persistent, not loose above, hairy with both numerous short hairs and a few long bristle-hairs. *Ligule* a rim of short hairs with tufts of silky hairs laterally. *Leaf blades* up to 4 mm wide, short, flat, somewhat contracted at the ligule, pointed, standing out rather stiffly from the culm, often with some bristles on the back, the lower leaves often covered with short hairs.

*Inflorescence* a simple terminal raceme, 2–4 cm long, with the spikelets densely crowded around and almost sessile on the axis. *Spikelets* (S) all similar, about 4 mm long, very shortly pedicelled, a small tuft of hairs at the base of the pedicel, falling entire at maturity. *Florets* 2, the lower floret neuter and reduced to a lemma, the upper bisexual. *Glumes* (G<sub>1</sub>, G<sub>2</sub>) rather dissimilar, both as long as the spikelet and pointed, rigid; the lower glume (G<sub>1</sub>) slightly reflexed at maturity, a tuft of stiff, tubercle-based bristles in a transverse row on the back along the top of a rectangular “window” or semi-transparent membranous area, 3–5-nerved; the upper (G<sub>2</sub>) much broader and partly enclosing the spikelet, prominently 7–11-nerved, tufts of stiff, tubercle-based bristles arranged along each margin. *Lemma* (L<sub>1</sub>) of the lower sterile floret  $\frac{2}{3}$  the length of the glumes, somewhat obtuse, 5-nerved, more or less membranous. *Palea* absent. *Lemma* (L<sub>2</sub>) of the upper fertile floret 3-nerved, membranous. *Palea* (P<sub>2</sub>) as long as the lemma, 2-nerved, the margins turned inwards. *Anthers* 3, 0.3–0.5 mm long.

Mulga grass is of western distribution, but it does extend into eastern Queensland, where it may be found on dry ridges or red, stony soils of lateritic origin. It is regarded as a valuable forage grass in the mulga lands, since it is very drought-tolerant and grows from the base and nodes of old culms after good rain. It is eaten by stock while in a young vegetative condition.

### REFERENCES

Bailey (1902),<sup>1</sup> p. 1846; Gardner (1952),<sup>2</sup> pp. 273–74; Vickery (1961),<sup>3</sup> pp. 72–74; Lazarides (1970),<sup>4</sup> pp. 178–79 (as *Neurachne* spp.); Blake (1972a),<sup>5</sup> pp. 25–43; Black (1978),<sup>6</sup> pp. 237–38; Jessop (1981),<sup>7</sup> pp. 485–86.

### KEY TO SPECIES

Spikelets 4.5–5 mm; tufted bristles along margin of upper glume, long, with pronounced basal tubercles; lower lemma shortly hairy,  $\frac{2}{3}$  to  $\frac{3}{4}$  length of glumes (mulga grass or mulga Mitchell)  
Spikelets 4 mm long; tufted bristles along margin of upper glume, shorter without pronounced tubercles; lemmas not hairy, almost length of glumes.

*T. mitchelliana*<sup>1,2,3,4,5,6,7</sup>

*T. xerophila*<sup>5,6,7</sup>