



UROCHLOA MOSAMBICENSIS

Sabi Grass

A perennial grass of somewhat variable habit, sometimes stoloniferous. *Culms* smooth, without hairs, branching at the nodes, 20–100 cm tall, at first spreading, but later becoming more or less erect. *Nodes* prominent, densely covered with short, silky hairs. *Leaves* on the culms, often clustered at the branched and rooted nodes. *Leaf sheaths* close, covered with erect, white, tubercle-based hairs, particularly in their upper part, striate, shorter than the internodes. *Ligule* a rim of short hairs. *Leaf blades* broad (up to 15 mm) and up to 15 cm long, densely covered on both surfaces with erect, tubercle-based hairs, which are longer on the margins and base of the leaf, the base rounded and constricted at the ligule, narrowing gradually to a point from about the middle, the mid-rib prominent, often purplish.

Inflorescence up to 15 cm long (usually less in southern Queensland specimens), with 4–12 racemes 2.5–9 cm long, which are at first erect and later spreading almost at right angles, opposite and clearly separated along the flat, 1 mm wide, striate axis, the spikelets borne on the underside, overlapping in 2 rows. *Spikelets* (S) all similar, 4.5 mm long, solitary or in pairs, the very short pedicel usually with 1–2 long, tubercle-based hairs up to 4 mm long, at maturity falling together with the glumes. *Florets* 2, the lower male, the upper bisexual. *Glumes* (G_1 , G_2) unequal; the lower glume (G_1) $\frac{2}{3}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ the length of the spikelet, 3-nerved, hairless, except for a tuft of hairs at the base, 1 or 2 bristles arising from a tubercle on the back of the mid-rib slightly above the middle, the tip rounded; the upper (G_2) almost the length of the spikelet, 5-nerved, the 2 lateral ones close to the margin, pointed, fairly hairy over much of the back, especially the lower part. *Lemma* (L_1) of the lower male floret as long as the spikelet, 3-nerved, the 2 lateral ones close to the margins, narrowly keeled and with a row of long bristles adpressed to the margins. *Palea* (P_1) equal to L_1 , 2-nerved and narrowly keeled along the margins. *Anthers* 3, 2.5 mm long. *Lemma* (L_2) of the upper fertile floret rounded on the sides and back, hardened and wrinkled on the surface, particularly at the sides, faintly 5-nerved, 3 mm long, the apex produced into a short, awn-like point 1 mm long. *Palea* (P_2) similar to L_2 , hardened, ridged, 2-nerved, the nerves close to the margins and narrowly keeled along the margin. *Anthers* 3, 1.5 mm long.

This southern African grass is naturalized in Queensland and grown commercially as a pasture grass, particularly in northern parts of the state and on heavier soils. The more common weed of cultivation is *U. panicoides*, which has a rather more lax, racemose panicle and narrower leaves.

REFERENCES

Chippindall (1955),¹ pp. 380–85; Vickery (1961),² p. 123; Barnard (1969),³ pp. 72–74.

KEY TO SPECIES

1. Lower glume $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{3}$ as long as spikelet; leaves ovate.
Annual (liverseed grass or urochloa) *U. panicoides*^{1,2,3}
Lower glume more than $\frac{1}{2}$ length of spikelet. Perennial. 2
2. Spikelet more or less hairy, a long bristle on pedicel exceeding spikelet; sheaths and leaves quite hairy. 3
Spikelets hairless, without bristles; sheaths and leaves sparingly hairy. *U. pullulans*²
3. Spikelets arranged in pairs along rhachis; both spikelets well developed. Rare. *U. rhodesiensis*¹
Spikelets arranged singly along rhachis, or if in pairs, one much reduced. Cultivated (Sabi grass) *U. mosambicensis*¹