



ZYGOCHLOA PARADOXA

Sandhill Canegrass

A dense, green, spreadingly branched, bushy, rather woody perennial, plants in separate sexes of male and female but alike in appearance, up to 1.5 m high and as much in diameter, with stout, creeping rhizomes and coarse, furry roots. *Culms* stout and woody, up to 8 mm in diameter, branching freely from the nodes. *Nodes* numerous. *Leaves* green, rather sparse, basal (on tufted plants), but mostly on the culms. *Leaf sheaths* loose, usually much shorter than the internodes, rigid, persistent, becoming fibrous at the base, striate, slightly keeled, expanded at the base and nearly encompassing the node, slightly rough. *Ligule* a rim of short hairs 1 mm long and slightly tufted laterally. *Leaf blades* flat, narrowing from the base to a fine point, fairly rigid, but keeled and thickened towards the tip; longer below (up to 30 cm), short to very short above, disarticulating at the ligule.

Inflorescences on male and female plants respectively, slightly different in appearance. *Male inflorescences* in globular heads, 1-2 cm in diameter, formed from a severely contracted, spatheate panicle, the heads subtended by a large spatheate bract, usually exceeding the head, and bearing a vestigial lamina, other smaller bracts are variously concealed within the spikelets of the head. *Spikelets* (S_1) all alike, 7-8 mm long, at maturity falling entire from the persistent bracts. *Florets* 2, both male. *Glumes* (G_1 , G_2), papery, 5-7-nerved; the lower glume (G_1) slightly broader than G_2 and slightly shorter than the spikelet; the upper (G_2) slightly narrower and longer than G_1 , and subequal to equal to the spikelet. *Lemmas* (L_1 , L_2) dissimilar; L_1 like G_2 , 5-7-nerved; L_2 smooth, shining, somewhat hardened, 5-nerved, rounded on the back, about $\frac{3}{4}$ the length of the spikelet, with a short point at the tip. *Paleas* (P_1 , P_2) dissimilar; P_1 papery, $\frac{3}{4}$ the length of L_1 , 2-nerved and strongly 2-keeled, the membranous marginal flaps enclosing the floret, slightly bristly down the keels; P_2 like L_2 in texture, subequal, 2-nerved and 2-keeled, flat on the back between the keels. *Anthers* 3, 4 mm long, purple. *Female inflorescences* in globular heads, 2.5-3.5 cm in diameter, the subtending spatheate bract shorter than the head, also with a vestigial lamina, other smaller bracts within the head, curved and rigidly pointed, making the head prickly. *Spikelets* (S_2) all alike, 6-10 mm long, falling entire at maturity. *Florets* 2, the lower one sterile, the upper female. *Glumes* (G_1 , G_2) similar, subequal, 7-9-nerved, papery; the lower glume (G_1) the length of the spikelet; the upper (G_2) slightly shorter than G_1 . *Lemmas* (L_1 , L_2) dissimilar; L_1 slightly toughened, 5-nerved, equal to G_2 ; L_2 about $\frac{3}{4}$ the length of S_1 , hard, smooth, shining, rounded on the back, 5-nerved. *Paleas* (P_1 , P_2) dissimilar; P_1 thin, 2-nerved and strongly 2-keeled, a row of short, fine bristles along the keels; P_2 like L_2 , but slightly shorter, slightly 2-keeled, 2-nerved, flat on the back between the keels. *Anthers* lacking.

This western grass is a true arid-zone plant found growing in sandy situations such as in the Simpson Desert (Lazarides, 1970). It is a good sand-binder on sandhills,

particularly along the crests, and is exceptionally hardy with its rhizomatous, spreading and bushy habit. It is browsed to some extent following the production of new shoots.

REFERENCES

Blake (1941*b*), pp. 7-11; Lazarides (1970), pp. 247-50; Vickery (1975), pp. 267-69; Black (1978), p. 235; Jessop (1981), p. 483.

KEY TO SPECIES

This is a monospecific genus endemic to the Australian arid zone.