Heteropogon contortus (L.) P.Beauv. ex Roem. & Schult.

Family:
Poaceae

Roemer, J.J. & Schultes, J.A. (1817) *Systema Vegetabilium Edn. 16* 2: 836.

Common name:
Bunch Speargrass; Black Speargrass

Stem

Tufted perennial. Culms slender, usually geniculate at base, 20-100 cm tall.

Leaves

Leaf sheaths keeled with lower part flattened; leaf blades flat or folded, 10-20 × 0.3-0.6 cm, scabrid or adaxial surface pilose at base, apex obtuse or shortly acute to apiculate; ligule a ciliate membrane 0.5-1.0 mm high and with a few long hairs on the shoulders. Old leaves pinkish brown.

Flowers

Inflorescence terminal or racemes gathered into a scanty panicle; spatheoles linear, tightly rolled around peduncle; peduncles mostly long-exserted. Racemes 3-7 cm (excluding awns), narrowly cylindrical, 7-12-awned, (1-)3-10(-12) pairs of flat green homogamous spikelets below the awned fertile pairs. Sessile spikelet 5-7 mm, dark brown; callus 2-3 mm, fiercely pungent, brown bearded; lower glume linear becoming cylindrical at maturity, sometimes hispidulous between veins; awn 6-10 cm, dark brown, column white-hirtellous, tips of successive awns often twisting together. Pedicelled spikelet 6-11 mm, lower glume oblong-lanceolate, greenish, laterally asymmetrically winged, glabrous or sparsely to densely pilose or tuberculate-hispid or white setose.

Fruit

Callus very sharp, with a collar of foxy red hair. Caryopsis dark reddish brown; testa with many longitudinal ridges and grooves, pubescent.

Seedlings

Features not available.

Distribution and Ecology

Occurs in WA, NT, CYP, NEQ, CEQ and southwards to New South Wales and widespread in norther Australia. Altitudinal range from near sea level to 900 m. Grows in openings in rainforest, in Eucalypt forest, various types of woodland and grassland. Also from warm-temperate areas to the tropics and subtropics of the world.

Synonyms

Andropogon contortus L., *Species Plantarum Edn. 1* 2: 1045(1753), Type: Habitat in India.

RFK Code

4262

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Leaf ligule. © R.L. Barrett

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Habit. © R.L. Barrett

Herbarium specimen. © DERM

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