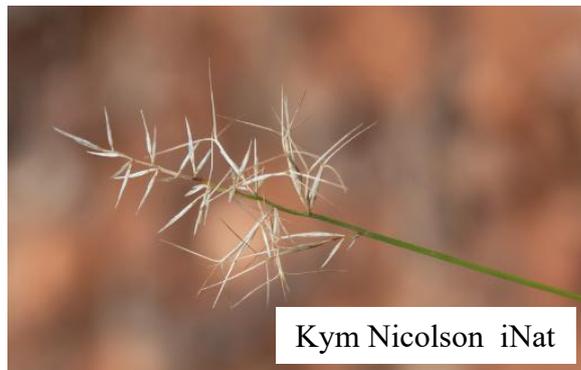


Poaceae

Aristida caput-medusae many headed wire-grass



Ann Moran
Field Botanist



ETYMOLOGY

(a-RIS-tid-a) Greek arista = awned alluding to trifid awn; The latin species caput-medusae = from caput = head + Medusa = monster with snakes for hair, alluding to the shape of the inflorescence resembling the head of the Medusae of Greek mythology.

LIFEFORM

Grass 30-80cm

STATUS

Common inland roadsides in Central south-eastern Qld to northern NSW.

OCCURS

Gurmundi, Surat, Longreach, Charleville Qld to NSW

QLD DISTRICTS

Burnett, Darling Downs, Leichhardt, Maranoa, Mitchell, Moreton, North/South Kennedy, Port Curtis, Warrego, Wide Bay

HABITAT

Inland woodland, rocky hillsides, Acacia/Eucalyptus communities

LEAVES

Blades, 2-4 cm x 0.5-1 mm, surface scabrous, rigid tufts, convolute, flat only at the base, firmly pointed, sheath abruptly narrowed at junction with blade, hairless, scaberulous 0.5 mm ligules.

FLOWERS

Panicles, 3-6 cm, broadly ovate, Branches short prominent pulvini, and widely spreading spikelets not congested: **Flowering Times** July

FRUIT

Grain with adherent pericarp, terete, not grooved, 4-6.1 mm. Embryo 25-50% of length of grain. Hilum linear, 40% of length of caryopsis. Lemma 6-10 mm, mostly exposed, purple or pallid and sometimes mottled; divergent to divaricate, to 15 mm awns. Hygroscopic behaviour of awn means tissues twist, curl, or straighten in response to changing humidity, helping the seed drill into soil. **Fruiting Times** July, Aug

ROOTS

Knotty rootstock stems wiry, numerous branches.

STEM

Erect perennial grass: Stems wiry, strongly branched, needle-like or sometimes compressed, minutely striate.

WILDLIFE

Fodder for Eastern Grey Kangaroo.

ETHNOBOTANY

Poor grazing since stems produce little leaf; Sharp barbed seeds spread by sticking into human socks and animal's fur.

LANDSCAPES USES

Compact tussocks are used as fillers in gardens.

ID FEATURES

Swelling short arms meet central seed head axis + spike-like panicle + Spikelets with long trifid, twisted awns.