

### NATIVE PASTURES

Native pastures are generally made up of a range of grasses including native perennials, legumes and other plants. Native grass pastures if managed correctly can be very productive. The first step is in recognising what native grasses occur on your property.



Typical native pasture in the Upper North

### PASTURE SPECIES IDENTIFICATION

Some native grasses may be difficult to identify often requiring specific expertise to tell different species apart. This fact sheet will give you some information so that you can identify the common native grasses in your area.

### TYPES OF NATIVE GRASSES

#### C<sub>3</sub> Grasses

Also known as winter active grasses e.g. Wallaby Grasses (*Austrodanthonia* species) and Spear Grasses (*Austrostipa* species). These grasses photosynthesise using a biochemical system that fixes carbon in molecules containing three atoms, or C<sub>3</sub> pathway.

#### C<sub>4</sub> Grasses

Also known as summer active grasses e.g. Windmill Grass (*Chloris truncata*) and Kangaroo Grass (*Themeda triandra*). These grasses photosynthesise using a biochemical system that fixes carbon in molecules containing four atoms, or C<sub>4</sub> pathway.

### C3 / WINTER ACTIVE GRASSES

#### White top (*Austrodanthonia caespitosa*)

- 20-90 cm tall
- Leaves green or bluish-green (hairy or hairless)
- Fluffy seed head, 'seeds' with rings of hairs and a twisted brown awn
- Flowering spring to autumn



White top tussock



White top seed heads



White top 'seeds'



#### Elegant Spear-grass (*Austrostipa elegantissima*)

- 0.25-2 m tall
- Leaves to 11 cm long
- Easily identified by its distinctive seed head
- Seed head has a feathery appearance
- May be rhizomatous
- Flowering in spring



Elegant Spear-grass tussock



Elegant Spear-grass seed head



Elegant Spear-grass 'seed'

**C3 / WINTER ACTIVE GRASSES CONT.**

**Desert Spear-grass (*Austrostipa eremophila*)**

- 0.4-1 m tall
- Leaves to 25 cm long,
- Leaf edge with long sometimes curly hairs
- Golden brown/copper coloured seed



Desert Spear-grass tussock



Desert Spear-grass seed head



Desert Spear-grass 'seeds'



**Noded Spear-grass (*Austrostipa nodosa*)**

- 20-90 cm tall
- Dull green leaves 10-30 cm long
- Seed-head often tinged purple
- Flowering spring to summer



Noded Spear-grass tussocks



Noded Spear-grass 'seeds'



Noded Spear-grass seed head

**NB.** There are a number of different Wallaby and Spear Grasses in the low rainfall zone only the commonly occurring species have been described.

**C4 / SUMMER ACTIVE GRASSES**

**Black-head Grass (*Enneapogon nigricans*)**

- 10-50 cm tall
- Cylinder shaped seed head with 'seeds' shaped like a shuttlecock or octopus
- Seed head dark green, ripening to pale straw or grey colour
- Flowering early spring to autumn



Black-head Grass tussocks



Black-head Grass seed head



Black-head Grass 'seeds'

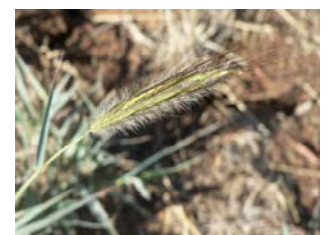


**Blue Grass (*Dichanthium sericeum*)**

- 0.04-1 m tall
- Leaves blue-green to green
- Seed heads with 2-4 branches, with white or silver hairs giving a silky appearance
- Short hairs on the nodes
- Rhizomatous
- Flowering summer to autumn



Blue Grass tussocks



Blue Grass seed head



Blue Grass 'seeds'

# UPPER NORTH FARMING SYSTEMS - NATIVE PASTURE IDENTIFICATION FACTSHEET

## C4 / SUMMER ACTIVE GRASSES CONT.

### Brush Wire-grass (*Aristida behriana*)

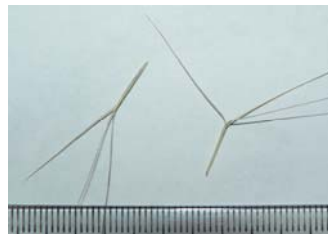
- 15-40 cm tall
- Bright green leaves
- Seed heads are brush-like purple in colour maturing to white-cream
- Seeds have a three pronged awn
- Flowering spring and summer



Brush Wire-grass tussock



Brush Wire-grass seed head



Brush Wire-grass 'seed'



### Curly Windmill-grass (*Enteropogon acicularis*)

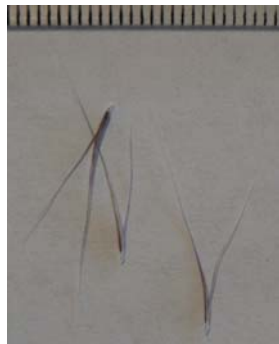
- 15-50 cm tall
- Blue-green leaves with curly dry tips
- Seed head are umbrella like with arms/branches spreading from a central stem
- Flowering summer to autumn



Curly Windmill-grass tussock



Curly Windmill-grass seed head



Curly Windmill-grass 'seeds'

## C4 / SUMMER ACTIVE GRASSES CONT.

### Kangaroo Grass (*Themeda triandra*)

- 0.4-1.5 m tall
- Bright green leaves turning blue-green with maturity
- Distinctive seed head turning reddish-brown in autumn
- Flowering summer to autumn



Kangaroo Grass tussocks



Kangaroo Grass seed head



Kangaroo Grass 'seeds'



### Lemon Grass (*Cymbopogon ambiguus*)

- 0.3-1 m tall
- White fluffy seed head
- Rolled blue-green leaves, sometimes curling at the tips
- Leaves and seed exude a lemon aroma particularly when crushed



Lemon Grass tussock



Lemon Grass seed head

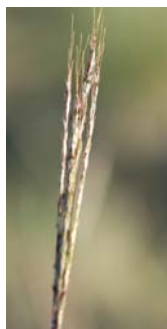
**C4 / SUMMER ACTIVE GRASSES CONT.**

**Red Grass (*Bothriochloa macra*)**

- 40-90 cm tall
- Bright green leaves with red tips
- Seed head is borne on red stems
- Seed heads have 1-4 silky branches which may appear single
- Flowering summer to autumn



Red Grass tussock



Red Grass seed head



Red Grass 'seed'



**Windmill Grass (*Chloris truncata*)**

- 10-70 cm tall
- Leaves are short (up to 20cm), blue-green
- Seed heads are windmill-like with arms/branches spreading from a central stem
- Flowers summer to autumn



Windmill Grass tussocks



Windmill Grass seed heads

**FURTHER INFORMATION**

**Fact Sheets**

Upper North Farming Systems – Native Grass Nutrition Fact Sheet (2009) prepared by Jodie Reseigh and Daniel Schuppan (Rural Solutions SA).

Upper North Farming Systems – Native Grass Nutrition Fact Sheet 2 (2010) prepared by Jodie Reseigh, Daniel Schuppan and Michael Wurst (Rural Solutions SA).

**Native Grass Identification**

Jessop, J., Dashorst, G. R. M. and James, F. M. (2006). Grasses of South Australia. Kent Town, Wakefield Press.

Mid North Grasslands Working Group (2010). Grasses, Gums and Groundcovers. Clare, South Australia, Mid North Grasslands Working Group.

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