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PLANTS PEOPLE
POSSIBILITIES



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SEPASAL is a database and enquiry service about useful "wild" and semi-domesticated plants of tropical and subtropical drylands, developed and maintained at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. "Useful" includes plants which humans eat, use as medicine, feed to animals, make things from, use as fuel, and many other uses.

Since 2004, there has been a Namibian SEPASAL team, based at the National Botanical Research Institute of the Ministry of Agriculture which has been updating the information on Namibian species from Namibian and southern African literature and unpublished sources. By August 2007, over 700 Namibian species had been updated.

Work on updating species information, and adding new species to the database, is ongoing. It may be worth visiting the web site and querying the database to obtain the latest information for this species.

Internet SEPASAL

New query

Edit query

View query results

 *Display help*In names list include: synonyms vernacular names and display: All names per page*Your query found 1 taxon***Hemarthria altissima (Poir.) Stapf & C.E. Hubb. [1758]**

Family: POACEAE

Synonyms

Manisuris altissima (Poir.) A. Hitchc.
 Manisuris fasciculata (Lam.) A. Hitchc.
 Hemarthria compressa (L.f.) R.Br. subsp. altissima (Poir.) Maire
 Hemarthria compressa (L.f.) R.Br. var. fasciculata (Lam.) Keng
 Hemarthria fasciculata (Lam.) Kunth
 Rottboellia heterochroa Gand.
 Rottboellia altissima Poir.
 Rottboellia compressa L.f. var. fasciculata (Lam.) Hack.
 Rottboellia fasciculata Lam.

Vernacular names

Afrikaans (South Africa)	Bataviesekweek [2259], perdekweek [2259], rooikweek (gras) [2259], rooivleigras [2259]
Afrikaans (Southern Africa)	perdegras [2182], rooikweek [2182]
English (Namibia)	halt grass [5083], red vleigrass [5115]
English (South Africa)	Batavian quick grass [2259], red vlei grass [2259], couch [2259], couch grass [2259], swamp couch [2259], swamp couch grass [2259]
English (Southern Africa)	Batavian quick grass [2182], red swamp grass [2182], swamp couch [5664]
English (U.S.A.)	limpo grass [5664]
English (Zimbabwe)	swamp couch [2259]
Manyika (Zimbabwe)	tsangadzi [2259]
Sotho (South Africa)	marotlo-a-mafubelu [2259], mohloxorima [2259], namele [2259], tajoe [2259]
Zezeru (Zimbabwe)	tsangadzi [2259]

Partial distribution

Plant origin	Continent	Region	Botanical country
Native	Africa	East Tropical Africa	Tanzania [2259]
		Northeast Tropical Africa	Chad, Ethiopia [3]
		South Tropical Africa	Angola [2259] [5126], Malawi [3] [2259], Mozambique [2259] [5480] [5664], Zambia [3] [2259]

			[5481], Zimbabwe [3] [2259] [5125] [5664]
		Southern Africa	Botswana [3] [2259] [5104] [5186] [5664], Cape Province [2259] [5104] [5664], Caprivi Strip [3] [5115], Lesotho [2259] [5104] [5550] [5664], Namibia [2259] [5104] [5115], Natal [2259] [5104] [5664], Orange Free State [2259] [5104] [5664], Swaziland [5104] [5452] [5664], Transvaal [5104] [5664]
		West Tropical Africa	Mali, Nigeria [3], Senegal
		West-Central Tropical Africa	Zaire [2259]
		Western Indian Ocean	Madagascar [5664], Mauritius
	Asia-Tropical	Indo-China	Burma [5664], Thailand [3]
		Malesia	Borneo [3]
	Europe	Southeastern Europe	Italy
Introduced	Northern America	Southeastern U.S.A.	Florida [5664]

ISO countries: India [5664] , Thailand , Turkey , United States , South Africa [2259] [5104] [5664]

Descriptors

Category	Descriptors and states
DESCRIPTION	Herb; Prostrate/Procumbent/Semi-erect [5664]; Erect; Terrestrial [5123]; Rhizomatous [2182] [2259] [5664] [6088]; Perennial [2182] [5115] [5123]; Mat Forming [2259] [5664]; Stoloniferous [2182] [2259] [6088]; Unarmed - unspecified parts; Plant Height <= 2.5 m [5104]
CLIMATE	Subtropical, Hot and Arid [5104] [5115]
SOILS	Sometimes Waterlogged (frequency unknown) [2182] [5123] [5664]; Saline [5123]; Alluvial Soils [5123]; Poorly Drained [2182] [5123] [5664]; Sandy [5123]; Silts [5123]
HABITAT	Pioneer Species [2182]; Dominant within Stands of Natural Vegetation [2182] [6088]; Grassland/Forb-Land [2182] [5123]; Wooded Grassland [2182]; Wooded Shrubland [2182]; Semi-Desert [2182]; Permanent Watercourses [3] [2182] [2259] [5123]; Lakes/Ponds/Pools [3] [5123]; Floodplains [5123]; Vlei/Dambo/Seasonally Flooded Grassland [3] [2182] [2259] [5123]; Altitude 5-2000 m a.s.l. [5104]
PHYSIOLOGY	Grazing/Browsing Resistant [2259]
CONSTRAINTS	Weed [2182]
FURTHER DATA SOURCES	Botanical Illustration [2182] [2259]; Additional References [6126]; Regional Distribution Map [2259]; Botanical Photograph [2182]; Databases [5123]; Grid Map [2182] [5115] [5123]
SEPASAL DATASHEET STATUS	All Data Transferred from SEPASAL Paper Files [6040]; Nomenclature Checked

Uses

Major use	Use group	Specific uses
FOOD	'Roots'	rhizomes, raw [1171] [2259] [2514] [5664]
ANIMAL FOOD	Aerial Parts	unspecified aerial parts, mammals, grazing [2259] [5664]; unspecified aerial parts, mammals, fodder [2259]; unspecified aerial parts, horses, fodder [2259]
MATERIALS	Fibres	stems, cord/string/twine, fences [2259]

Picture

None recorded

Notes

NOMENCLATURE/TAXONOMY

Name derivation:

The generic name is derived from the Greek 'hemi', which means half, and 'arthron', which means joint (half jointed), alluding to the resistance of the raceme joints to breaking up. 'Altissima' is Latin for highest - reason for name unknown [2259] .

VERNACULAR NAMES

English (America), Limpo grass:

Limpo refers to Limpopo, where it was probably first collected [5664] .

DISTRIBUTION

Angola:

Occurs only in the Moxico province [5126] .

South Africa:

Infrequent in the Karoo, Karroid and Kalahari areas [2259] .

Worldwide:

It occurs in southern Africa, West Africa, Madagascar, the Mediterranean region, India and Burma. It has also been introduced to the USA [5664] .

Worldwide:

Occurs in Mediterranean region southwards to Nigeria and Ethiopia, and then from Flora Zambesiaca area to South Africa (Cape), also in Madagascar and with isolated records from Burma, Thailand and Borneo. Introduced in America [3] .

Worldwide:

Widespread in western and southern Africa, the Mediterranean region, India and naturalised in America [2259] .

ORIGIN/DOMESTICATION

Florida, USA:

It was taken into Florida as early as 1964 [5664] .

DESCRIPTION

Height:

0.3-1 m rarely up to 1.5 m [2259] .

Height:

0.3-1.5 m [2182] [5664] .

Inflorescences:

40-120 mm long, inconspicuous and are difficult to distinguish from the culms. It is a flattened raceme with sunken spikelets. Spikelets 5-7 mm long [5664] .

Inflorescences:

A solitary spike-like raceme terminating the culm and each of its branches, compressed, awnless, fragile [2259] .

Leaves:

Bright green, but often flushed with rust-red colour which is particularly noticable in the dry season. Sheath compressed, smooth, with a few hairs along the margins towards the top. Ligule a short membrane fringed with hairs. Blade sharply keeled, flat but folding very readily when old and when excluded from moisture, smooth or nearly so, tapering to an acute point. When old and dry, the blades twist in a corkscrew fashion [2259] .

Leaves:

Leaf blade 50-150 mm long, 2-6 mm wide. Dry leaves are twisted like a corkscrew. Leaf sheath is strongly compressed [5664] .

Life form:

Graminoid [5104] .

Stems:

Culms and mature leaves have a red-brown colour for the greatest part of the year [5664] .

IDENTIFICATION

It is not easily confused with other grasses. It is the only Hemarthria species (12 worldwide) in southern Africa [5664] .

FOOD - 'ROOTS'

Rhizomes, raw:

The raw rhizomes seem to be eaten by children in Lesotho [1171] [2259] [5664] [6126] .

ANIMAL FOOD - AERIAL PARTS

Unspecified aerial parts, mammals, grazing:

It is a palatable grazing grass with a high leaf production. It turns green early in the season and remains acceptable for grazing until late in autumn [5664] .

Unspecified aerial parts, mammals, grazing:

It is able to withstand heavy grazing, and has been used for pastures, with limited success. Requires periodic cultivation to maintain vigorous growth [2259] .

Unspecified aerial parts, mammals, horses, fodder:

A valuable fodder grass, palatable to stock including horses [2259] .

MATERIALS - FIBRES

Cord/string/twine, fences, stems:

The stems are plaited into ropes used to bind the reeds forming the enclosure round a courtyard [2259] .

ALTITUDE

South tropical Africa:

15-1500 m [3] .

TOPOGRAPHY/SITES

Southern Africa:

Occurs in vleis and river margins and open water [2182] [2259] .

SOILS

Angola:

On sandy alluvium [5123] .

Namibia:

Occurs in soils with a salinity of 4 % [5123] .

Southern Africa:

On all types of soil particularly in granite areas [2259] .

VEGETATION

Southern Africa:

Fynbos, Savanna, Grassland, Nama-Karoo and Succulent Karoo [2182] .

ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS - MISCELLANEOUS

Southern Africa:

Always grows near or in water [5664] .

Southern Africa:

It is able to withstand heavy grazing [2259] .

Southern Africa:

It turns green early in the season and remains acceptable for grazing until late in autumn [2259] [5664] .

FLOWERING/FRUITING/SEED SET

Flowering, southern Africa:

November to May [2259] [5664] .

Flowering, southern Africa:

October to June [2182] .

CYTOLOGY

For the genus $x = 9, 10$ [2182] .

PHOTOSYNTHESIS

C4-NADP-ME with K-MS-NADP anatomy .

CULTIVATION

Florida:

Cultivated as pasture in damp soil [5664] .

Southern Africa:

It has been used for pastures, with limited success. Requires periodic cultivation to maintain vigorous growth [2259] .

Swamp couch is currently evaluated in various countries as cultivated pasture [5664] .

'CROP' MANAGEMENT

Southern Africa:

Requires periodic cultivation to maintain vigorous growth [2259] .

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Updated for southern Africa by E. Irish; checked by A. Jarvis; SEPASAL Namibia, National Botanical Research Institute. January 2006 .

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