Austrostipa elegantissima

Feather speargrass/Elegant speargrass

Seed with awns
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Plant features

Growth form  Perennial, C3, tufted, open grass with short rhizomes. 35-300mm high. Often has a fluffy silvery look when flowering and seeding.

Leaves  The stems are branched. The leaf sheaths are rough to touch and hairless on the upper surface. Leaf blades 1-2mm wide.

Flowers  The inflorescence is a compound of flowers usually held at the top of the plant, fluffy and grey/silver in colour. Flowers from Aug-Jan.

Fruits  The seed head is open with hairy branches. The outer husks of each spikelet are hairy and the inner husk has a sharp spike on the end. The seed is inside these husks and is 4-5mm long.

Distribution

Found throughout the Avon catchment as well as across the south west from Shark Bay to Wiluna and east of Esperance. Also found in the SA, NSW, Vic.

Zone, habitat

Grows in a range of soil types across the landscape including fresh and saline floodfringes and drier end of floodways.

Additional information

A useful grass species for revegetating floodfringes and drier floodways as it network of roots and foliage close to the ground stabilise the soil. Often seen growing up through low bushes, which it uses for support. It is an important food source and habitat for a range of fauna, especially ground dwelling species. Does not tolerate waterlogging but is slightly salt tolerant. Plants can be grown from tubestock or direct seeded. Threshing the seed from the awn facilitates ease of handling. It is also used in the florist and landscaping industry.