



photo: R. Reninkel

## Sorghum leiocladum

*Sorghum leiocladum* is a tufted perennial grass to 1 m high with cinnamon coloured flower spikes to 35 cm long [8]. The leaves are yellow-green in warmer months, frosted to pale brown in winter [1]. Its common name is Wild Sorghum [5]

Wild Sorghum can be mistaken for Kangaroo Grass (*Themeda australis*) when not flowering as both grasses are C4, form a similar-sized tuft and the leaves tend to be a rusty red colour, however *S. leiocladum* has a ring of white hairs like a ballerina skirt at the nodes on the stem [10].

Population map: [www.ala.org.au/explore/species-maps/](http://www.ala.org.au/explore/species-maps/)

### Natural Populations

*Sorghum leiocladum* occurs in Qld, NSW, NT, and Vic [4]. It grows in open dry sclerophyll forests and woodlands, mostly on hillsides and slopes, and on poorer soils in grassy woodlands [4, 8]. Generally *S. leiocladum* is found in the least disturbed sites, commonly within Kangaroo Grass (*Themeda australis*) communities [1].

*Sorghum bicolor* subsp. *bicolor* (Grain sorghum) is cultivated in Australia [6]. In addition, a similar con-generic weed species, *Sorghum halepense* occurs in Australia in moist habitats, sub-tropics and Mediterranean climatic zones often on agricultural land, road sides and disturbed or wet sites [6]. *S. halepense* can be difficult to control and can cross-pollinate with other sorghums to

contaminate seed [6]. *S. halepense* can be differentiated from *Sorghum leiocladum* by the absence of the ring of hairs at the stem nodes [6].

## Flowering and Seeds

*S. leiocladum* flowers from November to March, with seed yields variable and related to seasonal conditions [5]. It is wind-pollinated and locally-dispersed with no specialised dispersal mechanism [5].



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## Cultivation and Uses

Fresh seed germinates easily with no dormancy restrictions [5], although it has an after-ripening period. Best germination occurs above 20°C. Dry storage at alternating temperatures can overcome dormancy [2].

It is a hardy species which copes with a range of soil types [8], and prefers sunny, dry grassland areas [10]. It resprouts after fire [5].

The presence of *S. leiocladum* has been shown to increase the success of establishment of surface-sown introduced grass species and also had a greater influence than *Poa sieberana* and *Bothriochloa ambigua* [7].

*S. leiocladum* provides food for adult butterflies and their larvae [8].

The seeds of *S. leiocladum* were ground and baked and eaten by indigenous people [11,12].

*Sorghum* species are readily grazed by stock and can be used for hay or silage. They also have the potential for causing cyanide toxicity in livestock, particularly if the plants are young, wilted, stunted, frosted, or covered with dew or light rain. Toxicity problems are likely to arise only on areas in which the plants are abundant; occasional plants occurring in natural pastures should not be a cause of concern [3].

photo: R. Clarke



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To source seeds or plants:  
[www.grassywoodlands.org.au](http://www.grassywoodlands.org.au)



photo: R. Reinhinkel

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## References

- [1] Eddy, D., Mallinson, D., Reinhinkel, R. and Sharp, S. (1998). *Grassland Flora, a field guide for the Southern Tablelands (NSW&ACT)*. Canberra, ACT.
- [2] Ralph, M. (1997). *Growing Australian Native Plants from Seed For Revegetation, Tree Planting and Direct Seeding*. Fitzroy, Victoria: Murray Ralph/Bushland Horticulture.
- [3] Cunningham, G.M., Mulham, W.E., Milthorpe, P.L. and Leigh, J.H. (1981). *Plants of Western New South Wales*. D. West: NSW Government Printing Office.
- [7] Dowling, P. M. (1978). Effect of resident vegetation on establishment of surface sown pasture species at Glen Innes, New South Wales. *Australian Journal of Experimental Agriculture and Animal Husbandry* 18(92) 411 – 414. Online: <http://www.publish.csiro.au/paper/EA9780411.htm>
- [12] Flood, J. (1980). *The Moth Hunters*. Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra.

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## Internet links

- [4] PlantNET National Herbarium of New South Wales: <http://plantnet.rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/cgi-bin/NSWfl.pl?page=nswfl&lvl=s&p&name=Sorghum~leiocladum>
- [5] The Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain Trust: [http://www.rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/science/Evolutionary\\_Ecology\\_Research/Ecology\\_of\\_Cumberland\\_Plain\\_Woodland/woodland\\_plants/sorghum\\_leiocladum](http://www.rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/science/Evolutionary_Ecology_Research/Ecology_of_Cumberland_Plain_Woodland/woodland_plants/sorghum_leiocladum)
- [6] International Environmental Weed Foundation website: [http://www.iewf.org/weedid/Sorghum\\_halepense.htm](http://www.iewf.org/weedid/Sorghum_halepense.htm)
- [8] Greening Australia Nursery, Queensland: [http://www.qld.greeningaustralia.org.au/gaqotsasp/07\\_plant\\_search/features.asp?SpeciesName=Sorghum%20leiocladum](http://www.qld.greeningaustralia.org.au/gaqotsasp/07_plant_search/features.asp?SpeciesName=Sorghum%20leiocladum)
- [10] Friends of Grasslands website: [http://www.fog.org.au/Brochures/grasses\\_brochure.htm](http://www.fog.org.au/Brochures/grasses_brochure.htm)
- [11] Australian National Botanic Gardens and Australian National Herbarium website: <http://www.anbg.gov.au/apu/plants/sorgleio.html>