

## Perennial veldt grass

### Scientific name(s)

*Ehrharta calycina*

### Strengths

- Drought tolerant. Tolerant of low temperatures, strongly acid soil and low soil fertility

### Limitations

- Poor winter growth; highly sensitive to water-logging

### Plant description

**Plant:** quite variable, perennial tussock grass; grows in clumps to 1.8 m tall. Its 2-phase fibrous root system facilitates perenniality in "annual" environment.

**Leaves:** hairless, filiform, to 7 mm wide, flat/rolled. Has white transparent ligule. Auricle is purple at maturity

**Seedhead:** drooping open panicle; hairy spikelets, 4-8mm long. Reddish-purple flowers, 7-22cm long

**Seeds:** Variable, ~220,000/kg, often considerable inert matter and low germination

### Pasture type and use

A hardy pasture plant for light soil/low rainfall. Moderately resistant to fire. Also used to prevent soil erosion.

### Where it grows

#### Rainfall

> 300 mm

#### Soils

Light textured; very suited to sandy soil. Tolerant of strong acid, high exchangeable aluminium and alkalinity

#### Temperature

Tolerant of a wide temperature range, inclu extreme cold.  
Seed germinates at 13-28°C

### Establishment

#### Companion species

Grasses: cocksfoot – if sown at < 1kg/ha

Legumes: serradella, sub clover, annual medics and lucerne

#### Sowing/planting rates as single species

1-2 kg/ha; will recruit seedlings and thicken up on sandy soil. Sow 3 kg in higher rainfall.

Purchase certified seed. Request recent germination test on seed as the quality of stored seed falls rapidly and seed is usually uneven re maturity

### **Sowing/planting rates in mixtures**

0.5 kg/ha

### **Sowing time**

Autumn. Late winter/spring OK in summer rainfall areas

### **Inoculation**

Not applicable

### **Fertiliser**

Superphosphate or MNP; correct nutrient deficiencies; sensitive to low N which can be common on deep acid sands. Nitrogen build-up with serradella or lupins in the previous year(s) greatly improves establishment on such soil soil

## **Management**

### **Maintenance fertliser**

Tolerates low fertility

### **Grazing/cutting**

Allow to head before grazing in establishment period. Rotational spelling is required to replenish root reserves. Avoid heavy summer grazing. Occasionally allow to head and seed if thinning

### **Seed production**

Prolific seeder ( ~3,500 seed/plant) but seed ripens unevenly and falls quickly. Commonly yields 100-200 kg/ha (500 with irrigation). Max. yield and seed quality may be obtained by windrowing ~7 weeks post-commencement of flowering. cv Mission has been improved for low shattering/high seed yield.

Seed can be scarce, expensive and very variable in quality. Trough harvesting begets quality seed

### **Ability to spread**

Moderate; seed dispersed by wind over short distances

### **Weed potential**

A weed in some parts of Australia and California. Readily establishes on disturbed acidic sandy soil.

### **Major pests**

None known

### **Major diseases**

None known

### **Herbicide susceptibility**

Very little known; no chemicals registered for use. 2,4-D and 2, 4-DB are considered reasonably safe

## **Animal production**

### **Feeding value**

Good

### **Palatability**

Extremely palatable; can be grazed out if grazing not managed

### **Production potential**

Good production depends on good companion legume. Most productive in autumn and spring; responds to summer rain

### **Livestock disorders/toxicity**

Considered non-toxic

### **Cultivars**

| <b>Cultivar</b> | <b>Seed source/Information</b>   |
|-----------------|--|
| Mission         | Australian Herbage Plant Cultivars<br><a href="http://www.irwinhunter.com.au">www.irwinhunter.com.au</a> |

### **Further information**

[www.westmidlandsnrg.org.au/Perennials/Farmnotes/Note11-1998WellAdaptedPerennialGrassesEsperanceSandplain](http://www.westmidlandsnrg.org.au/Perennials/Farmnotes/Note11-1998WellAdaptedPerennialGrassesEsperanceSandplain)  
[www.dpi.vic.gov.au/DPI/Vro/vrosite.nsf/pages/invasive\\_perennial\\_veldt\\_grass](http://www.dpi.vic.gov.au/DPI/Vro/vrosite.nsf/pages/invasive_perennial_veldt_grass)

### **Acknowledgements**

CSIRO, Departments of Primary Industry

### **Author and date**

KFM Reed, July 8th 2008