

Grasses of Cape York - Quinkan Country

Eriachne rara R.Br.

This species occurs in Cape York Peninsula as an erect short-lived perennial, 16-60 cm high. Stems and leaves are hairy with more or less stiff hairs or sometimes mostly hairless. Leaves are cauline (arising along the stem), blades to 20 cm long and 3 mm wide, the blade bristle-like with margins often rolled inwards (involute) and rough to the touch (Fig. 1). Inflorescences or flowering branches terminate the stem and are well exerted some distance from leaf axils. The inflorescences or flowering branches are open panicles with branches arising along a central stem, panicles are 3.5-10 cm long and 0.5-5 cm wide (Fig. 2). *Eriachne rara* has spikelets (the basic flowering unit) consisting of two glumes encompassing two bisexual florets (modified flowers) (Fig. 3). The florets are subequal or slightly shorter than the glumes, with the lemma of each floret giving rise to a curved awn 13-30 mm long, the palea of each floret is notched into two awnlets 0.5-2 mm long at apex.

> BOTANICAL DESCRIPTION

A short-lived perennial species to 16-60 cm high. The leaves and culms hairy with stiff tubercle-based hairs or sometimes mostly glabrous. Leaf blade to 20 cm long and up to 3 mm wide, setaceous, with margins scabrous. The inflorescences are open panicles, 3.5-10 cm long, 0.5-5 cm wide (Fig. 2). Spikelets are defined by two glumes 5-9 mm long, each tapered into a sharp point which is often split into two awnlets to 2.5 mm long. The glumes encompass two bisexual florets, the florets slightly shorter than or subequal to the glumes, the lemma 3-5 mm long. The lemma of each floret is awned, the lemma awn 13-30 mm long, with the palea of each floret tapered and notched or split into 2 awnlets 0.5-2 mm long, (Fig. 3). The lemma is hairy in lower $\frac{3}{4}$ with simple hairs usually exceeding the apex, and without grooves, but depressed or shortly grooved at base of awn.



Fig. 1. Herbarium sheet of *Eriachne rara*



Fig. 2. Inflorescence of *E. rara*

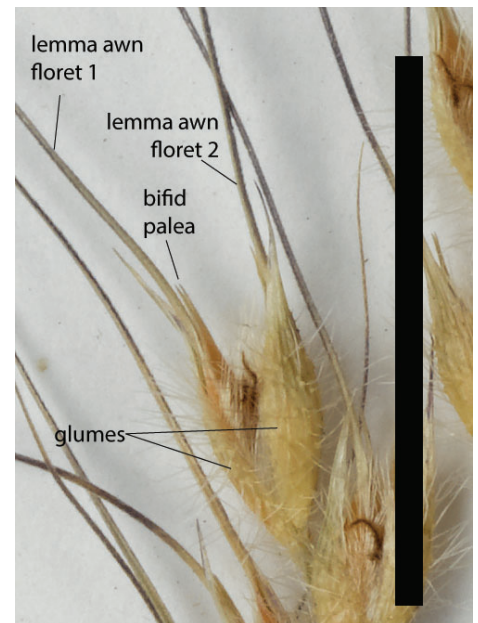


Fig. 3. Mature spikelet of *E. rara*

> DIAGNOSTIC FEATURES

Eriachne rara is one of many species of *Eriachne* characterised by long awned spikelets, the awns curled, curved or bent. Other long awned species of *Eriachne* which occur in the region and may be easily confused with this species are *E. armittii*, *E. burkittii*, *E. glauca*, *E. squarrosa*, *E. stipacea*, and *E. vesiculosa*. Some of these species are more easily distinguished than others. Most are treated in this guide, however some of the key differences between the species are shown in Table 1. In other regions of Australia e.g. the Northern Territory, additional species may also need to be considered. *Eriachne rara* is distinguished by the combination of the following characters, a dense covering of hairs, a loose tuberculate hairy panicle, short often red florets, the florets slightly shorter than glumes and the beaked bifid palea. Users are encouraged to consult Lazarides (2005) or Simon & Alfonso (2011) for more detail on distinguishing between these species.

> NATURAL VALUES

This species is likely to provide seed for granivorous or seed eating animals.

> HABITAT

This species occurs along the east coast of Australia in New South Wales and Queensland north of 30°S. Found predominantly on islands and the coastal mainland in deep or shallow sandy or stony soils in association with sandstone, laterite or granite. Also found on slopes, ridges, *Melaleuca* swamps and seasonal water channels. (Lazarides 2005, Simon 2011).

> LAND MANAGEMENT NOTES

Species of this genus are considered generally to be of low forage value (Lazarides 2002).

Table 1: Characters useful in diagnosing 7 long awned *Eriachne* species found in the Quinkan region of CYP.

Species	Habit	Inflorescence	Floret to glume size	Palea apex	Groove on lemma apex
<i>E. armittii</i>	annual	contracted 2.5-7 cm long, 0.8-1.8 cm wide	Distinctly shorter than glume	Palea bifid into two awns	No
<i>E. stipacea</i>	annual/perennial	loose to open 5-13 long, 2.4-7 cm wide	Distinctly shorter than glume	Palea bifid into two awns	Yes or no
<i>E. squarrosa</i>	perennial	contracted, dense c. 3 cm long, c. 1.5 cm wide	Distinctly shorter than glume	Palea bifid into two awns	No
<i>E. burkittii</i> !*	short lived perennial	loose to open or drooping 10.5-19 cm long, 1-6 cm wide	Subequal to exceeding glume	Palea entire or bicuspidate	Yes
<i>E. rara</i>	short lived perennial	Open 3.5-10 cm long, 0.5-5 cm wide	Slightly shorter/ subequal to glume	Palea bifid into two awnlets	No
<i>E. vesiculosa</i> *	annual/perennial	Open 5-10.5 cm long, 1-3.5 cm wide	Much shorter than glume	Palea bifid into two awns	Yes
<i>E. glauca</i> *	perennial	contracted, dense 3-8.5 (-14) cm long, 1.5-3 (-5) cm wide	Subequal to glumes	Notched or bifid to 0.5 mm	Yes

! Purple colouring

* Short bladder like sacs on upper leaf surface (only visible with microscope or hand lens)



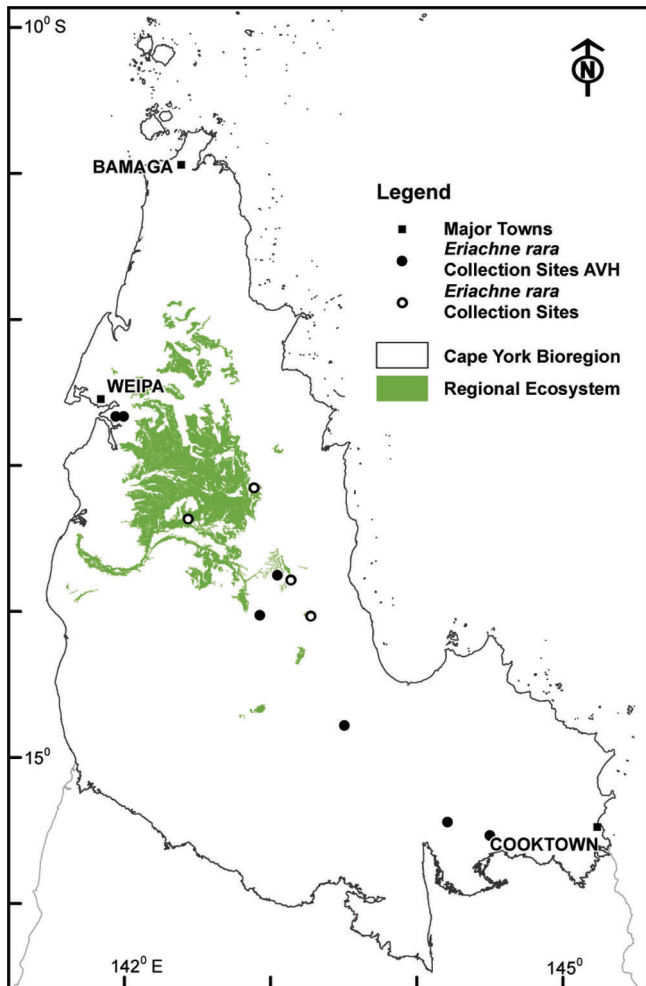


Fig. 4. Map of CYP bioregion showing actual herbarium collections (from BRI and CNS) (solid circle) and site records (open circle) of *Eriachne rara*. The green shading indicates areas where this species might also be found, based on similarity of habitat to locations where the species has been recorded. (Mapping supplied by P. Bannink, DES). Data attribution: Environment and Science, Queensland Government, Biodiversity status of pre-clearing and 2015 remnant regional ecosystems series - version 10.0 licensed under Creative Commons Attribution.

RESOURCES:

AVH (2017) Australia's Virtual Herbarium, Council of Heads of Australasian Herbaria, <<http://avh.chah.org.au>>, accessed 30 May 2017.

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Lazarides, M., Weiller, C.M. & McCusker, A. in Mallett, K. (ed.) (2005) *Eriachne*. *Flora of Australia* 44B: 132-175.

Simon, B.K. & Alfonso, Y. (2011) AusGrass2, <http://ausgrass2.myspecies.info/> accessed on [20 March 2017].

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