

Register of Australian Herbage Plant Cultivars

A. Grasses

7. Paspalum

Paspalum scobiculatum L. (scrobic paspalum) cv. Paltridge

Reg. No. A-7a-1

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Origin

Introduced by CSIR (C.P.I.2696) in 1931 from Miss S.M. Stint of Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia, under the name *Paspalum scobiculatum* L. var. Stapf. The name "scrobic" was coined by Mr. W.S. Kelly in a talk given for the Australian Broadcasting Commission in 1944(6). It was the subject of extensive testing by CSIR at Lawes on the Darling Downs, Qld., during the period 1938-48 (6), and subsequently grown at various sites in south-eastern Queensland by CSIRO and the Queensland Department of Primary Industries (2). It was given the cultivar name Paltridge by the Queensland Herbage Plant Liaison Committee in 1966; scrobic paspalum was retained as the common name for the species.

Morphological description (3)

A loosely tufted, short-lived perennial with ascending, somewhat succulent branched stems up to 90 cm high; tufts up to 60 cm in diameter; culms with 4-6 nodes. Leaves up to 30 cm long and 12 mm wide, flat, soft, completely hairless on mature plants but covered with soft short hairs in the seedling stage; ligule membranous 1.5-2.5 mm long; no auricles. Inflorescence of 3-4 (rarely more) racemes 4-9 cm long, borne along a simple unbranched axis; rachis about 2 mm broad with a few long hairs at base. Spikelets 1-flowered, obtuse, broad, and elliptical, on short pedicels in two rows along one side of the rachis; with one glume and one sterile lemma, both glabrous, 5-nerved, 2.5 mm long and 2 mm wide. The glume and sterile lemma are thin and papery at maturity and lightly invest and fall with the "seed". The seed is composed of the hardened fertile lemma and palea which completely invest the caryopsis; it is ellipsoid, flat on one side, markedly convex on the other, about 2 mm long, 1.5 mm wide, and 1mm deep, hard, light brown, shiny, averaging 660,000 per kg. It is a tetraploid with $2n = 40$ (7).

Cv. Paltridge is sometimes slightly stoloniferous; and is leafier and more succulent than *Paspalum dilatatum* and does not run to stalk as early in the season (5).

Agronomic characters

Paltridge scrobic paspalum is summer-growing and requires an annual rainfall of 890 mm or more; it is adapted to the subcoastal areas of south-eastern Queensland and the eastern Darling Downs. It requires fertile soil and adequate nitrogen (5); under low nitrogen and/or excess phosphate it becomes less perennial (6). It is very frost-sensitive. Although compared with other *Paspalum* species it showed only a medium to low yield in trials at Samford, Qld. (8), experience elsewhere is that it provides a productive pasture in combination with legumes or nitrogenous fertilizer (1, 2, 5, 6).

It is very palatable and highly digestible during summer; and retains this palatability and digestibility later into maturity than most grasses and even when frosted (5). It has, however, a low crude protein content compared with many other grasses (4). It flowers freely and is sexual in reproduction; lack of variation in the field possibly reflecting a high degree of self-fertilization (7). It sets seed over an extended period of 3-4 months from January, the seeds falling as they mature. It requires an intermittent form of grazing which will permit sufficient seeding for regeneration (6).

References

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