

COMMON NAME: Silky Blue Grass **SCIENTIFIC NAME:** *Dichanthium sericeum*

CATEGORY: C4 perennial (summer active)

IDENTIFICATION TIPS

- Tufted warm season, perennial to 80cm tall. Stem nodes have a prominent ring of hairs
- Seedhead is subdigitate, to 7cm long and with 2-4 erect branches pressed together
- Spikelets are paired and hairy, with the lower awned. Spikelets occur to the base of the branches (i.e. no bare branch bases)
- Flowers from late spring to autumn

CLIMATIC & SOIL REQUIREMENTS

- Widespread and common
- More common on clay soils and sites that receive extra summer moisture, such as water run-on and flood areas
- Abundance varies from year to year; restricted to more favourable sites in dry years, but can become abundant following a series of wet summers
- Moderate drought tolerance, but low frost tolerance

GRAZING & NUTRITIONAL VALUE

- Moderate grazing value
- Digestibility ranges from 38-62 %
- Crude protein 2-7%

MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

- **Highly palatable** and nutritious when young and actively growing; stalky and low quality at flowering
- Possibly more suited to cattle enterprises as it appears to be less palatable to sheep, allowing it to become tall and rank
- Growth responds well to increased fertility. Declines under set stocking systems as cattle selectively graze it (sheep less so); better suited to rotational grazing
- Will easily re-establish from seed, so spell during flowering and seed set to increase or maintain populations

SIMILAR PLANTS

- The seedhead branches of red grasses (*Bothriochloa* species) are bare for a very short distance at the base and the nodes are hairless

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