

Vascular Plants of Williamson County
Eragrostis superba – WILLMANN LOVEGRASS [Poaceae]

Eragrostis superba Wawra & Peyr., WILLMANN LOVEGRASS. Perennial herb, rhizomatous, not rosetted, fibrous-rooted, cespitose and many-stemmed at base (or with several formerly connected plantlets in clump), principal axes often bent at some lower nodes (geniculate) above appearing erect, in range to 95 cm tall; shoots with several basal and 2–3 cauline leaves having sheaths concealing nodes, flag leaf not hiding inflorescence, lacking glands on plant, with a conspicuous tuft of long hairs on collar; rhizome shallow, horizontal and condensed, ca. 3 mm diameter; adventitious roots arising from rhizome and bases of shoots. **Stems:** ± cylindric with flattish face above a lateral branch, to 4 mm diameter, internodes to 140 mm long, nodes hidden by overlapping sheath margins, smooth, glabrous; internodes base to inflorescence solid, central tissue white. **Leaves:** alternate distichous, simple with sheath; prophyll strongly 2-keeled, acute-triangular, to 23 × 8 mm, ivory-colored, winglike below midpoint, with sparse, minute teeth on keels approaching tip, entire on margins; sheath open, of the first basal leaf = triangular sheath often without vestigial blade, low-ridged, having wide membranous margins at base, glabrous, other basal leaves and cauline leaves often smooth on back and membranous margins finely ciliate, often reddish brown at base (hiding node), lacking lobes (auricles) at top, at collar on outer and inner surface having a dense tuft of grayish white hairs to 3 mm long; ligule membranous-ciliate, to 1 mm long; blade linear, (6–)70–350+ × < 2.5–6.8 mm, flat drying inrolled, with minute teeth on margins, long-tapered to tip, parallel-veined with fine veins raised on both surfaces, upper surface minutely scabrous with minute teeth along veins, lower surface lacking projections. **Inflorescence:** spikelets, in upright, somewhat compact, terminal array, in range 100–190 mm long, principal branch 1 per node with the largest branch forked just above base, ascending to ± appressed to axis and appearing to lack pulvinus or sometimes with minute projections at base, each having several–many spikelets, each branch with several ascending branchlets having fertile + often some aborted spikelets, the longest branches in range to 80 mm long, fertile spikelets mostly with 6–23 fertile florets in close alternate distichous display spaced 0.5 mm along rachilla, florets widely spreading and mostly 3.5–4.5 mm long, lacking awns; central axis and branch axes ± smooth and lacking hairs or teeth; bract subtending the lowest principal branch, appressed, inconspicuous, broad, short, and membranous; branchlet axes sometimes and stalks of spikelets with scabrous teeth, stalk (“pedicel”) (1–)3–7 mm long. **Spikelet:** broadly ovate strongly compressed side-to-side, 6–15 × 6–7 × 1.5 mm, breaking as a unit below the glumes retaining tough lemmas and paleae (with reflexed margins) persistent; **glumes** 2, subequal, keeled and folded, acute, 3.3–3.8 mm long, lower glume > upper glume and < adjacent floret, 1-veined, vein green, minutely scabrous along keel, sides often light purple-red; callus at base of each floret with a tuft of straight, hirsute hairs to 1 mm long; **lemma** boat-shaped (not folded), 3.5–4.5 mm long, > glume, 3-veined, veins parallel and green not converging at tip, acute at tip (lacking mucron), glabrous above callus, midvein scabrous on upper 1/3, often blushed red-purple, aging somewhat leathery; **palea** 2-keeled acute at tip, 2-veined, at anthesis membranous and acute-ovate, 3–4.2 mm long and to 2 mm wide (flattened), nearly as long as lemma and often appearing slightly exserted, at anthesis veins green aging white, aging tough but remaining membranous

between keels and having reflexed margins, the margins short-fringed (“ciliate”) visible and expanded outside lemma approaching base, sometimes splitting downward from tip. **Flower:** bisexual; **perianth (lodicules)** 2, narrowly fan-shaped aging flat, ca. 0.5 mm long, translucent; **stamens** 3, free; filaments threadlike, to 3 mm long, white; anthers dorsifixed, dithecal, exserted, on the same plant 1.4–2.8 mm long, yellow, longitudinally dehiscent; pollen light yellow; **pistil** 1; ovary superior, obovoid, ca. 0.5 mm long, opaque, glabrous, 1-chambered with 1 ovule; styles 2, 2 mm long, lower portion colorless and threadlike, bottlebrushlike above midpoint. **Fruit:** achene (caryopsis), ellipsoid to obovoid-ellipsoid, 1.5–2.2 × 0.7–1 mm, reddish brown, rounded at base and with 2 style bases at top.

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