

Vascular Plants of Williamson County

Paspalum floridanum – FLORIDA PASPALUM, BIG PASPALUM, FLORIDA CROWNGRASS
[Poaceae]

Paspalum floridanum Michx., FLORIDA PASPALUM, BIG PASPALUM, FLORIDA CROWNGRASS. Perennial herb, rhizomatous, fibrous-rooted, several-stemmed at base, cespitose, unbranched from base, with ascending inflorescences, flowering in range 100–140 cm tall; shoots with several bladeless belowground basal leaves and several aboveground basal leaves and to 6 ascending, cauline leaves, with straight hairs to long hairs with enlarged bases on leaves and in axils of inflorescence; rhizomes horizontal, to 6 mm diameter, internodes to 6 mm long, yellowish white, with some straight, appressed hairs, at nodes, the scales mostly 8–16 mm long, sheathing and acute at tip, aging brown and fibrous with 15+ raised parallel veins on both surfaces; adventitious roots nodal on rhizome. **Stems (culms):** cylindric or somewhat compressed, to 6 mm diameter, tough, nodes purplish red, internodes to 150 mm long, smooth and glabrous; internodes hollow. **Leaves:** alternate distichous, simple with sheath; leaves belowground white and red-rose; sheath of foliage leaves open, to 280 mm long, striped, rounded and smooth (not keeled), to midplant short-hairy to pilose at nodes or with the longer hairs above midpoint, often long-ciliate on exposed margin with hairs having enlarged bases, of the upper 2 leaves glabrous, without lobes (auricles) at top; ligule membranous, truncate and somewhat jagged, in range 1.5–2.5 mm long, translucent aging papery brownish and splitting to base, jagged on margin; collar 2–3 mm long, whitish aging red-purple, pilose on upper side with hairs to 8 mm long; blade linear, < 300–600 × 12–17 mm, the widest at or above midblade, folded V-shaped below midblade and flat above midblade, minutely toothed on margins base-to-tip (somewhat scabrous), long-tapered to tip, parallel-veined with veins raised on both surfaces, upper surface often pilose and with hairs to 8 mm long behind ligule, lower surface typically glabrous with minute, blunt teeth along veins. **Inflorescence:** spikelets, in terminal panicles with 2–5(–6) spikelike branches above foliage, branches 1 per node, 1-sided having 2 rows of overlapping spikelets on lower side, 95–155 × 4 mm and distinctly 3-sided, the lowest branch sometimes concealed by flag leaf sheath, spikelets in alternating pairs along central ridge, with to 50 nodes, on each edge 5.5 mm apart, spikelet with 2 florets with lower one sterile and upper one fertile, bracteate, lacking awns; peduncle cylindric, tough, smooth and striped, hollow; bract subtending branch absent, at each fork with conspicuous tuft of long, straight hairs to 11 mm long; principal panicle axis channeled and hemi-cylindric, glabrous; rachis of each branchlet 3-sided, channeled on sides with spikelets, upper surface (lacking spikelets) strongly sinusoidal, 1.3 mm wide, green and striped, minutely scabrous on edges, each lower surface with paired stalks of spikelets arising alternately along central ridge; stalks of paired spikelets fused at point of attachment to rachis, the longer 3-angled, to 1.5 mm long, with the older spikelet, the shorter ± cylindric, both scabrous; on branchlets the lowest nodes with aborted spikelet to only 1 spikelet per node, other nodes with 1 fertile spikelet and the later aborted, at most nodes with 2 fertile spikelets, with flat side of the first spikelet oriented upward and second spikelet twisted 45° thus 4 spikelets across but rows zigzagged. **Spikelet:** broadly oval-obovate in outline, 3.5–4.2 × 2.8–3.2 mm (fertile spikelets), rounded on 1 side (upper glume) and flattish on other side (lower lemma), glabrous, breaking below glume; **glume**

1, lower glume absent, upper glume ovate, 3.5–4 mm long, greenish with 5 green veins converging at tip. **Lower floret lemma** subequal to upper glume, margins and tip inrolled over upper lemma, face flat with conspicuous midvein flat or slightly raised, stiff (chartaceous); lemma (upper floret); **palea** absent. **Upper floret lemma** inrolled over upper palea, in outline ca. 3×2.6 mm, tough and \pm hard (somewhat indurate), flat surface minutely textured with vertical cell rows (rugulose) lacking veins except at base but having veins with each inrolled margin to tip; **palea** enclosed by margins of lemma, membranous, not keeled, obtuse-ovate, 3×2 mm in outline, 2-veined, between veins concave and rugulose, margins to glabrous, the incurved margins wide-membranous while extending to midpoint and enveloping flower, open at top. **Flower:** bisexual; **perianth (lodicules)** 2, very fleshy, plump fan-shaped, $\pm 0.6 \times 0.5$ mm, translucent; **stamens** 3, free; filaments threadlike, 2–3 mm long, translucent; anthers exserted, dorsifixed, dithecal, 2–2.2 mm long, burgundy, longitudinally dehiscent, burgundy (yellowish on dorsal side); pollen yellowish white; **pistil** 1; ovary superior, roundish biconvex, 0.5×0.5 mm, pale green, glabrous, 1-chambered with 1 ovule; styles 2, widely separately at base, 2.5 mm long, translucent to midpoint, stigmatic and bottlebrushlike above midpoint, exserted ca. 0.8 mm from top of lemma, burgundy. **Fruit:** achene (caryopsis), enclosed by inrolled upper glume, lower lemma, and upper floret (lemma and infolded upper palea), spikelet flattened on 1 side and \pm round on other side, ca. 4×3 mm, straw-colored and papery; upper floret hemi-obovoid-ellipsoid, $\pm 3.5 \times 2.8$ mm, light orange-brown, finely textured = vertical files of cells; achene permanently retained, hemi-ellipsoid, ca. 2.8×2.2 mm, opaque pale orangish brown.

A. C. Gibson