

Spinifex longifolius

BEACH SPINIFEX

R.Br.

Flowering period: July–January.

Description: Rhizomatous, tussock to spreading perennial grass to 1 m high, clonal for many metres in eroding situations. In sand burial situations the rhizome spreads with emergent vertical stems that bear flowers; in stabilised dunes lacking sand burial, the plant becomes tufted and non-creeping. Leaves narrow, 15–30 cm long, 1.5–3 mm wide, rigid yet flexible, grooved on translucent upper surface, lower surface rounded and green. Flowers either male, female or bisexual; male heads 10–16 cm across producing brown stamens, female heads spherical, large and conspicuous to 20 cm across with female flowers concealed at the base of elongated, stout hairs (awns) covered in bristles. Seeds produced in the spherical heads that break off and can be wind blown for hundreds of metres till stopped by an obstacle or lodged in a wind-protected area. Germination occurs in heads that become partially buried by accreting sand.

Pollination: Wind pollinated.

Distribution: Widespread and very common throughout the west coast from the Kimberley region to south coast. On the Perth coast found in highly exposed frontal dunes to stabilised secondary dunes often mixed with low *Acacia* species and *Olearia axillaris*.

Propagation: Using seed heads planted directly into dune areas in late summer to early autumn. Rhizome divisions comprising 15–20 cm long vertical shoots taken from actively growing plants can be planted directly into moist soil or struck in pots containing standard potting mix. Plant deeply to ensure good root development and production of lateral rhizomes. Cuttings taken at any time of the year strike well if planted into a free-draining potting mix. At planting-out time, ensure plants are buried deeply leaving only the green shoots exposed to encourage root development from the buried nodes.

Uses in restoration: One of the best primary stabilising species of the Perth coast that thrives under high wind, salt spray and sand eroding conditions. Particularly useful for replacing the weedy marram grass in dune stabilisation programs.

Notes: It is important to ensure that nursery stock is hardened prior to planting into wind exposed locations. A fast-growing species under sand accreting situations.



Habit



Male flowers



Female flowers



Distribution