

Spinifex hirsutus

HAIRY SPINIFEX

R.Br.

Flowering period: October–January.

Description: Rhizomatous, spreading, silvery grey-green perennial to 50 cm high with clones extending over many metres. Stems cane-like, horizontal in deep sand, with vertical stems and rooting along nodes if buried by sand drifts. Leaves 10–40 cm long, 9–17 mm wide, soft and intensely silvery, hairy on both surfaces. Male flower heads 50–70 mm in diameter, spherical, with numerous brown stamens produced at flowering time. Female heads (occasionally bisexual) large, conspicuous, up to 30 cm diameter, spherical with numerous long, rigid hairs or awns. Female flowers open at the centre of the heads with the only visible part being the feather-like stigmas produced at the base of the awns. When mature, the seed head snaps and can be blown by the wind for hundreds of metres along the strand until lodging at the base of an obstacle or being deposited in swales. Wind-borne sand then buries the heads over time with only the tips of the awns visible.

Pollination: Wind pollinated.

Distribution: Very widespread and locally common due the clonal behaviour of the species. Favours frontal, highly wind-exposed and sand-accreting primary dunes. Species rapidly declines when dunes consolidate and the sand burial processes that the species relies upon cease.

Propagation: Direct planting of rhizome divisions (winter) and burial of seed heads into restoration areas (late summer-early winter) have been used to propagate the species. Ensure direct implanted divisions are in moist soil or at least are well watered. Alternatively, 15–20 cm long cuttings with a few leaves attached can be taken at any time of the year. When planting greenstock ensure plants are buried deeply with only the shoot with attached leaves exposed, which ensures good root development from the buried nodes that will aid establishment.

Uses in restoration: A primary colonising species of coastal dunes that can be used to replace introduced marrum grass in dune stabilisation.

Notes: Naturally colonises frontal dune areas once introduced into an area. Can be sensitive to excessive trampling.



Habit



Female flowers



Male flowers



Distribution