

Austrostipa elegantissima FEATHER SPEARGRASS

(Labill.) S.W.L.Jacobs & J.Everett

Flowering period: August–January.

Description: Rhizomatous, tufted to diffuse herb, often growing within and being supported by a nearby shrub; slender erect stems to 2 m tall arising from an underground rhizome. Leaves 50–150 mm long, 1–3 mm wide, often hidden among foliage of support plant. Flowers in open, diffuse heads that are covered in long silky hairs giving the flowering plant an almost shimmering effect. Flowers on long stalks tipped by a highly elongated bristle (awn) that aids seed burial. Parts of the seed head comprising 5–10 seeds can break off on breezes ensuring an effective means for long-range seed dispersal.

Pollination: Wind pollinated.

Distribution: Widespread in secondary dunes in the Perth region often in shrublands to heathlands and though never abundant, plants are conspicuous at flowering and seeding time. Found in all temperate coastal regions in Australia.

Propagation: From seed sown into seed trays and pricked out when 1 cm tall.

Uses in restoration: Though planted at low frequency to emulate natural abundance, the species adds to the biodiversity richness in dune restoration programs. Only plant into dunes when primary restoration works have established a protective shrub layer. Plant at or near the base of species such as *Melaleuca systema* and *Spyridium globulosum*.

Notes: A highly decorative species for the home garden with the attractive flower heads providing a mist-like quality when planted in and among other coastal shrubs.



Habit



Seeds



Habit



Distribution