

**82. AIRA** Linnaeus, Sp. Pl. 1: 63. 1753.

银须草属 yin xu cao shu

Wu Zhenlan (吴珍兰); Sylvia M. Phillips

Annuals, small. Leaf blades rolled. Inflorescence an open or contracted panicle. Spikelets small, laterally compressed, florets 2, both alike, bisexual, separated by very short internode, disarticulating below each floret; rachilla not extended beyond upper floret; glumes persistent, equal, enclosing florets, ovate, membranous, shining, 1(–3)-veined, apex acute; floret callus small, usually shortly bearded laterally, rarely glabrous; lemmas ovate, rounded on back, membranous becoming firm at maturity, indistinctly 5-veined, glabrous, upper part scaberulous to scabrid, awned from lower back or lower floret awnless, apex 2-toothed; awn geniculate with twisted column; palea slightly shorter than lemma. Anthers small. Caryopsis fusiform.  $2n = 14, 28$ .

Eight species: centered on the Mediterranean region, extending northward to Scandinavia and eastward to Iran and Afghanistan; introduced in other temperate regions; one species in China.

**1. *Aira caryophylla*** Linnaeus, Sp. Pl. 1: 66. 1753.

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Culms solitary or tufted, erect or slightly geniculate, very slender, 5–30 cm tall, scabrid. Leaf sheaths scaberulous; leaf blades narrowly linear to filiform, 1–5 cm, 2–3 mm wide; ligule lanceolate, 1–4 mm, acute becoming lacerate. Panicle open, ovate in outline, up to 10 cm; branches 2–5 cm, capillary, scabrid, bearing spikelets in clusters toward tips; pedicels 2–4 mm, up to twice spikelet length, a pear-shaped swelling below spikelet. Spikelets ovate-oblong in outline, 2–3.5 mm, shining, silvery-gray or tinged purplish; glumes as long as spikelet, keel scaberulous; florets both awned; lemmas brown, 3/4 length of glumes, scabrid, narrowed to 2-toothed apex; awn 2.5–4 mm, arising from lower 1/3 of lemma. Anthers 0.3–0.6 mm.

Dry grassy places in mountains; ca. 3600 m. W Xizang [India, Russia; N Africa, SW Asia, Europe; introduced in North and South America and Australia].

This pioneer of dry, open places is now widespread in temperate regions.

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