粟草属 su cao shu

Wu Zhenlan (吴珍兰); Sylvia M. Phillips

Annual or perennial. Leaf blades flat; ligule membranous. Inflorescence a terminal open panicle. Spikelets elliptic or ovate, with 1 floret, bisexual, slightly dorsally compressed, disarticulating above glumes, rachilla extension absent; glumes subequal, as long as spikelet, herbaceous, persistent, 3-veined; callus very short, obtuse, glabrous; lemma elliptic, slightly shorter than glumes, leathery becoming indurated and glossy at maturity, smooth, glabrous, obscurely 5-veined, margins involute, apex acute, awnless; palea resembling lemma in texture, 2-veined, not keeled. Lodicules 2. Stamens 3.

Five species: Europe eastward to Japan, also in E North America; one species in China.

This genus has often been placed in Stipeae, but molecular evidence shows its relationship lies within Poeae.

粟草 su cao

Perennial, shortly rhizomatous. Culms loosely tufted, erect, slender, 0.9–1.5 m tall, smooth, glabrous, 3–5-noded. Leaf sheaths loose, slightly inflated, glabrous; leaf blades broadly linear to linear-lanceolate, thin, soft, 10–30 cm, 5–15 mm wide, glabrous, abaxial surface gray-green, adaxial surface green, margins scaberulous, apex acute; ligule lanceolate, 2–10 mm. Panicle ovate or pyramidal in outline, very lax, 10–30 cm; branches in clusters of up to 6, slender, flexuous, spreading or deflexed, smooth or scabrid, lower part bare. Spikelets 3–4 mm, gray-green or tinged with purple; glumes elliptic-ovate, scaberulous, margins white, apex acute; lemma glossy, milky-white when young, brown at maturity. Anthers 2–3 mm. Fl. and fr. May–Jul. 2n = 14, 28.

Forests, moist shady places; 700–3500 m. Anhui, Gansu, Guizhou, Hebei, Heilongjiang, Henan, Hubei, Hunan, Jiangsu, Jiangxi, Jilin, Liaoning, Ningxia, Qinghai, Shaanxi, Sichuan, Taiwan, Xinjiang, Xizang, Yunnan, Zhejiang [Afghanistan, Bhutan, Japan, E Kazakhstan, Korea, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan; SW Asia, Europe, North America].

This is a good forage grass. The culms are used for weaving.