

Prairie Cord Grass *Spartina pectinata*

Poaceae—Grass family

by Tom Reaume © 2011 Nature Manitoba

Grant: 

A **perennial grass** 0.2–2.3 m tall in colonies from sharply pointed **rhizomes** 1–40 cm long by 2–10 mm thick, slightly hollow, stiff, tan to reddish, covered with pointed scales 1–3 cm long; along river and stream banks, swamps, ditches and moist prairie.

● **FLOWERS** green, blooming June–October; **inflorescence** a single panicle of spikes, terminal, total length 5–50 cm by 3–22 cm wide, the nodes 0.5–5.5 cm apart; **floral branches** (peduncles) naked, scabrous, 2–48 mm long by 0.5–0.8 mm thick, reduced above, ascending, each with 1 spike; **spikes** 2–50 per inflorescence, each 1.3–12 cm long by 3.5–4.5 mm wide (across the rachilla), reduced above; **pedicels** (of spikelets) 1–2.5 mm long, flat, hairs along both sides continuing onto the midveins of both glumes; **spikelets** 1-flowered, overlapping, each 9–25 mm long (including awns) by 2–2.5 mm wide by c. 1 mm thick, laterally compressed, crowded and alternating in 2 rows along two sides of the triangular, light purple rachilla of each spike, 10–80 per spike, averaging c. 6 spikelets per cm of spike; **rachilla** edges wavy, 0.4–1.2 mm wide (midway), flat on the outside edge with appressed white hairs along all 3 sharp edges, each side c. 1 mm wide, with the apical spikelet attached c. 6 mm from the rachilla tip that extends like an awn from each spike; **glumes** 2, unequal, scabrous along the midnerves and awns; **1st glume** 1-nerved, the body 4–9 mm long by 0.3–0.5 mm wide (one side), with an awn 1–4 mm long; **2nd glume** 3-nerved, the body 9–14 mm long by 1 mm wide (one side) with a scabrous awn 2–10 mm long; **lemmas** 1-nerved, awnless, 6–10 mm long by c. 1 mm wide (one side), the midnerve scabrous, apex bidentate; **paleae** 2-nerved near the center, glabrous, as long as or slightly longer than the lemmas and c. 1 mm wide (across one folded side), the apex with 2 teeth c. 0.2 mm long; **stamens** 3; **anthers** 4.5–7 mm long, reddish purple, exserted and hanging; **styles** 2-parted; **stigmas** spreading, 4–5 mm long, exserted, feathery; **flower to fruit** 8–9 weeks.

● **FRUIT** a grain, 1-seeded, body 5–7.6 mm long by 1.1–1.6 mm wide by 0.5–0.7 mm thick, flattened, often with a 1 mm long remains of a style at the apex, hairless, tan, walls thin; **seeds** brown, smooth, filling the grain, divided lengthways into 2 distinctly colored parts.

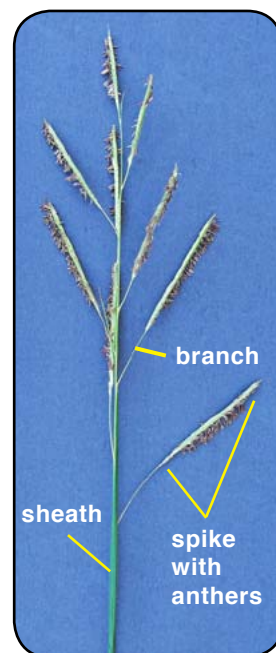
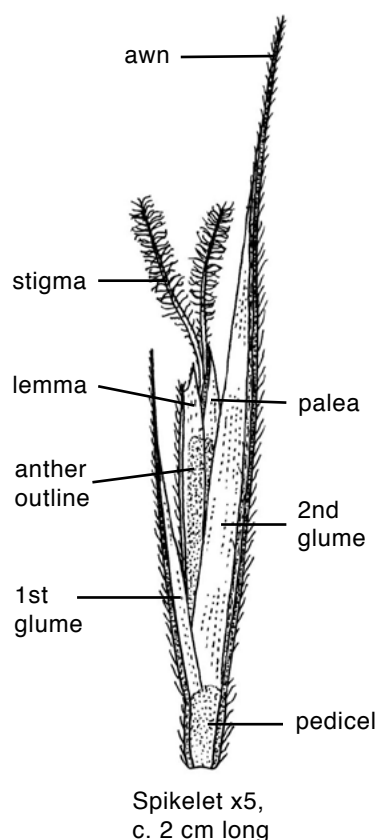
● **LEAVES** erect, alternate, 3–6 per culm, the uppermost blade usually extending through and up to 60 cm beyond the apex of the inflorescence; **blades** flat, becoming tightly involute on drying in the autumn, 11–120 cm long by 4–15 mm wide, the edges scabrous, strongly ridged above, glabrous below, ascending with arched tips, tapered to a long fine point; **ligules** a fringe of hairs 2–4 mm long united at their bases to a tan membrane c. 0.3 mm long; **auricles** absent; **sheaths** glabrous, reddish at the apex in autumn, open their full length, lower margins overlapping.

● **STEM** a culm, erect, round, hollow, glabrous, persists overwinter, some vegetative; 3–10 mm thick near the reddish base; **nodes** unremarkable.

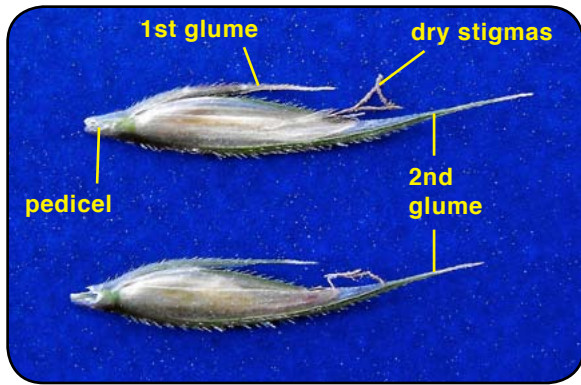
● **RANGE:** (CAN) 10 provinces; (USA) 41 states; a **native**.



A colony of Prairie Cord Grass to about 1.3 m tall along the bank of Sturgeon Creek in Winnipeg, Manitoba



Inflorescence 30 cm long in bloom with 9 alternating spikes



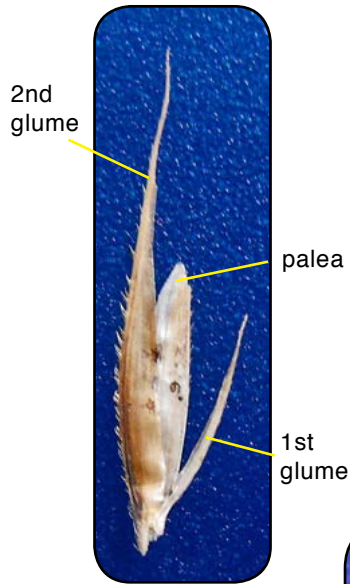
Two spikelets c. 17 mm long with wilted stigmas



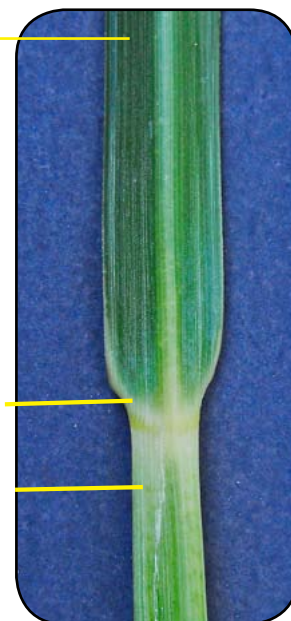
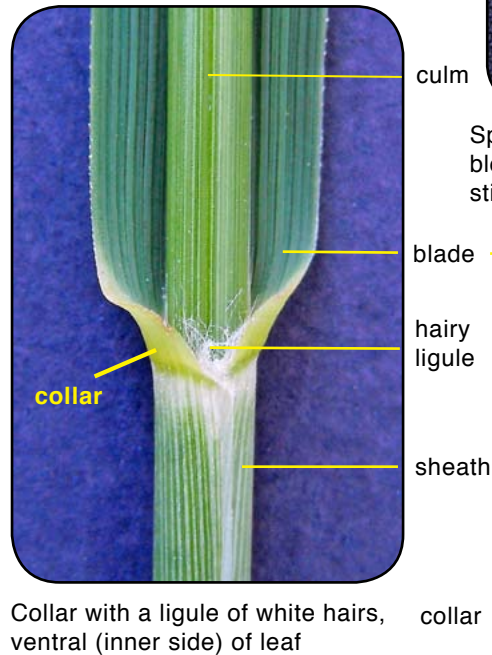
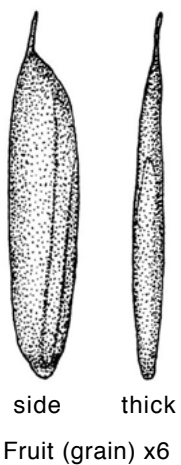
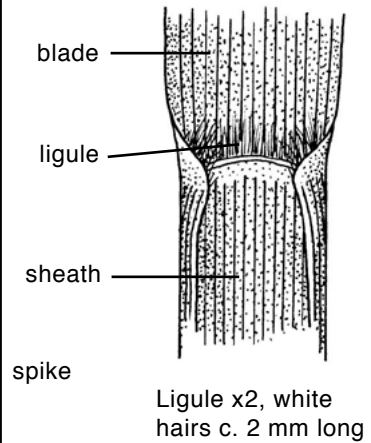
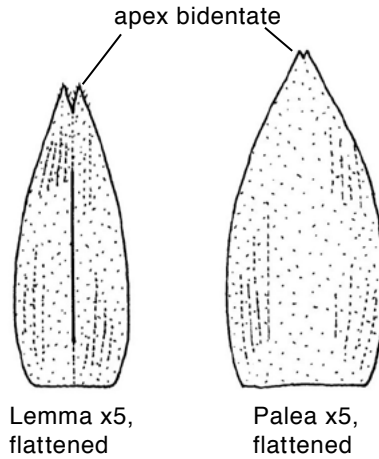
Prairie Cord Grass spike 8.6 cm long with white stigmas exerted



Spike 8.2 cm long with purplish anthers exerted



A spikelet 18 mm long, the length defined by the scabrous 2nd glume



Spike 8 cm long with exerted, hanging purplish anthers

Leaf collar from dorsal (outer) side in Winnipeg, Manitoba

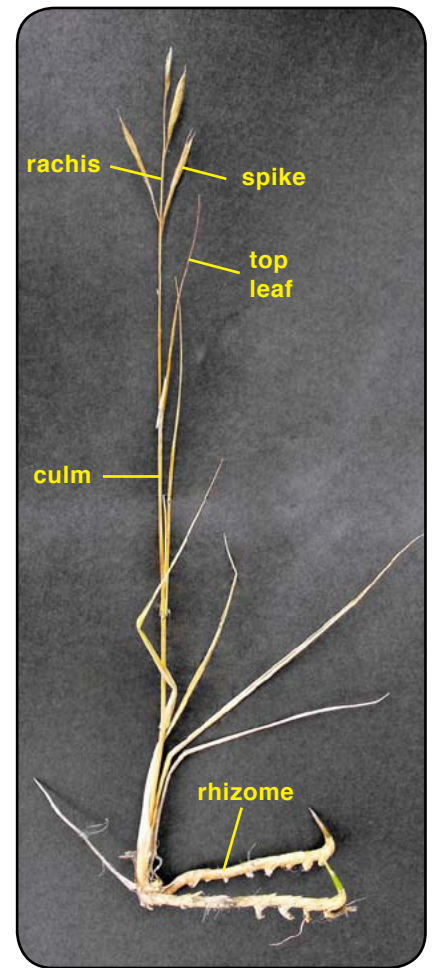
Inflorescence emerging from top leaf's sheath



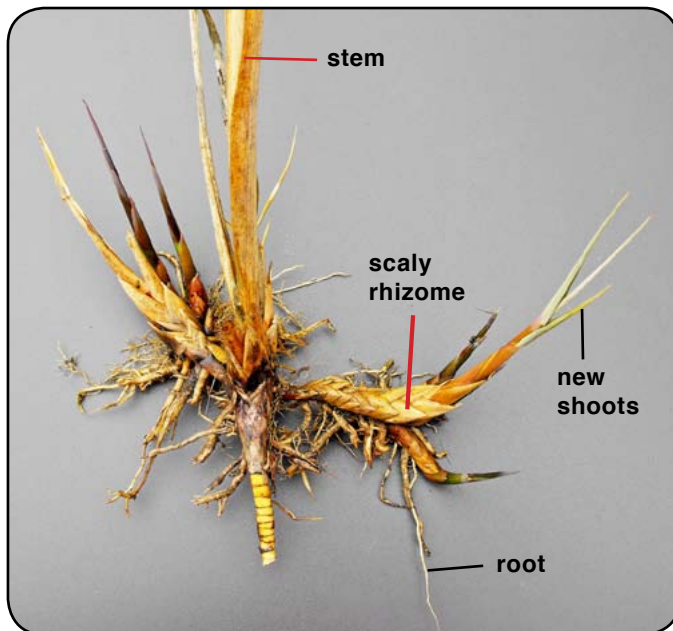
Spike 7 cm long (left) in fall with dark brown central rachilla c. 1 mm wide with golden spikelets attached and ascending on two sides



New erect shoots from rhizome in fall



A 33 cm tall plant with fruit during the fall in Winnipeg, Manitoba



Rhizomes and new shoots from base of plant in fall



Scaly pattern of a rhizome



Prairie Cord Grass 2 m tall with pinkish erect new shoots developing in the fall and a long rhizome 5 mm wide