**Scientific Name:** *Schizachne purpurascens* (Torr.) Swallen ssp. *purpurascens*

**Family:** *Poaceae*

**Common Names:** false melic, false melic grass, purple oat grass

### Plant Description
Slender perennial, loosely tufted; culms erect from a short-decumbent base, 40 to 80 cm tall, very slender, sheaths closed; ligules 0.5 to 1.5 mm long; blades are flat; inflorescence an open lax panicle, the branches single or in pairs, more or less drooping, bearing 1 to 2 awned spikelets about 2 cm long, disarticulating above the glumes and between the florets; unequal glumes, shorter than adjacent lemma, purple at base; lemma lanceolate, long hairy callus; awns as long as lemma or longer (Moss 1983).

**Seed:** Dark brown, dry caryopsis, lanceolate, 1 to 2 mm long.

### Habitat and Distribution
Common throughout Alberta. A woodland species, found in aspen, mixed wood and coniferous forests, in montane areas, openings in wooded regions (Tannas 1997).

**Seral Stage:** Early to mid seral.

**Soil:** Most commonly found on coarse textured soils in northeastern Alberta.

**Distribution:** British Columbia, District of Mackenzie to James Bay, northern Quebec, Newfoundland south to New Mexico, South Dakota, Great Lakes; Southern Alaska, southern Yukon (Moss 1983).

### Phenology
A cool season grass that blooms in June (Prairie Originals 2009). Seed ripens in July.

### Pollination
Wind (Friedman and Barrett 2009).

### Seed Dispersal
Wind and animals. Awns can catch on passing mammals fur.

### Genetics
2n=20 (Moss 1983).

### Symbiosis
None known.

### Seed Processing

**Collection:** Can be harvested by hand into breathable bags.

**Seed Weight:** 1.70 g/1,000 seeds.

**Harvest Dates:** Harvested at the end of July in northeastern Alberta.

**Cleaning:** Air-dry seed heads in paper or Tyvek bags at 15 to 25°C. Remove large chaff and crush remaining material. Small chaff and dust can be removed by winnowing.

**Storage Behaviour:** Orthodox; seeds can be dried, without damage, to low moisture contents, their longevity increase (Royal Botanic Gardens Kew 2008).
Storage: Preliminary results show that viability drops rapidly after a year of cool dry storage. 90% viability following drying to 15% moisture content and freezing for 186 days at -20°C (Royal Botanic Gardens Kew 2008).

Longevity: No literature found.

Reclamation Potential
Of limited value in erosion control, *Schizachne* is not yet generally used in reclamation seed mixes (Tannas 1997).

Commercial Resources
No literature found.

Notes
*S. purpurascens* is listed as 76% intact (less occurrences than expected) in the Alberta oil sands region (Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Institute 2014).

Is a host for the larvae of the northern pearly-eye butterfly (*Enodia anthedon*) (Government of Canada 2010, Prairie Originals 2009).

Photo Credits
Photo 1: Wild Rose Consulting, Inc.

References


