

Sporobolus indicus

West Indian dropseed, smutgrass, rattail grass

Sporobolus indicus (L.) R. Br.
Syn. *S. poiretii*

Family: Poaceae

Description: A bunchgrass to 3 ft tall. Leaves narrow, densely arranged at base. Ligule a fringe of hair. Inflorescences narrow, cylindrical with branches pressed against the flowering stem often covered with a black fungus. Seeds brown, oblong-cuboid, shiny. [Two other weedy dropseeds occur in similar situations: African dropseed, smutgrass or rattailgrass (*S. africanus* [Poir.] Robyns & Tournay, syn. *S. capensis*). Fruit dark red. From Africa, occurs on all the inhabited islands except Ni‘ihau. Indian dropseed (*S. diander* [Retz.] P. Beauv.) is distinguished by a panicle that opens at maturity. The seed is green to brown, cuboid-oblong. A native of India, it occurs on Hawai‘i, Lana‘i, and O‘ahu.] Greek *sporos*, seed; *ballein*, to throw, reference to the fruit, which pushes out its seed on soaking; also the source of the name “dropseed”; *diander*, two stamens^(5, 70); *capensis*, from Cape Colony, South Africa⁽¹⁹⁾; *africanus*, of Africa⁽⁶⁹⁾.

Distribution: From tropical America, occurs throughout the tropics. In Hawai‘i, on all inhabited islands except Ni‘ihau in pastures and other grasslands, especially where the soil has been compacted. First collected on Hawai‘i in 1924⁽⁷⁰⁾.



Environmental impact: Spreads in areas where there is traffic and the soil has been compacted. A tough, unpalatable grass that reduces pasture productivity and is particularly aggressive in wet and swampy soils⁽⁶¹⁾.

Management: Sensitive to glyphosate. Wipe-on applications suppress dropseed without injuring lower-growing plants. Short-duration, intensive grazing and measures to avoid soil compaction are probably required for economical control of the smutgrasses in pastures.