



ARRHENATHERUM ELATIUS

A distinctive variant of *Arrhenatherum elatius* (L.) P. Beauv. ex J. & C. Presl has long been recognised in which the lowest internodes are swollen to form 'bulbs' (in typical *A. elatius* the lowest part of the stem is similar in diameter to the rest). This is treated as var. *bulbosum* (Willd.) St-Amans in Stace's *New Flora*, and has been treated as subspecies elsewhere. It differs in frequency in different parts of the country and the two varieties are not found growing together in the wild. For example, it is often found in hedgebanks in Cornwall and can also be a troublesome weed of arable fields in central southern England, but seems rare in E England (Cussans & Morton 1990).

The easiest way to examine *Arrhenatherum* is to uproot a few culms from a clump. In var. *bulbosum* the lowest internode(s) are globose, subglobose or ovoid, 5-10 mm wide and distinctly broader than those above. Var. *elatius* has the lowest internodes cylindrical, 1-4 mm wide and similar in character to those above (these measurements have been made on dried material). The two varieties can interbreed freely, and var. *bulbosum* appears to be an extreme member of a series in *A. elatius*. Both varieties are illustrated in Hubbard's *Grasses*.

Remember to record var. *elatius* even if it is the only variety present.

References Cussans, J. & Morton, A. (1990). *BSBI News* **55**: 18-19.
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Pfitzenmeyer, C. D. C. (1962). *Journal of Ecology* **50**: 235-245.

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