



DESCHAMPSIA CESPITOSA

The members of the *Deschampsia cespitosa* (L.) P. Beauv. complex in the British Isles can be identified using the key below. Stace's *New Flora* treats all the taxa as subspecies. Please state which account you are following.

Deschampsia parviflora (*D. cespitosa* var. *parviflora* (Thuill.) C. E. Hubb.) ($2n=26$) is more or less confined to shaded places in ancient woodland from Kintyre and C Scotland southwards. Diploid *D. cespitosa* occurs at high altitudes in the C and NW Highlands and at low altitude in the Scottish Islands and more remote areas (e.g. coastal Caithness), and tetraploid *D. cespitosa* is found in unshaded habitats throughout Scotland and elsewhere.

Viviparous plants, previously referred to *D. alpina* (L.) Roem. & Schult., are now split into *D. laevigata* and tetraploid *D. cespitosa*. The old records from England and Wales probably refer to tetraploid *D. cespitosa*.

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| 1 | At least some viviparous spikelets present | 2 |
| 1 | Viviparous spikelets absent | 3 |
| 2 | Small, often less than 30 cm; leaf tip strongly hooded; panicles usually elongate-triangular in outline when well-grown and markedly directed to one side, usually with reflexed branches; nearly always totally viviparous, plantlet attachment very brittle even at time of emergence from sheath; glumes and lemmas usually closely appressed to plantlet; plantlet more than 0.8 mm in diameter below lowest true leaf | <i>D. laevigata</i> |
| 2 | Often very large; leaf tip gradually tapered to sharp point; panicle ovoid triangular rarely with reflexed branches; panicles totally or partially viviparous, plantlet attachment firm even when panicles mature, glumes and lemmas often divergent; plantlet usually less than 0.8 mm in diameter below lowest true leaf | (viviparous tetraploid) <i>D. cespitosa</i> (L.) P. Beauv. |
| 3 | Shade tolerant woodland plant with bright green leaves and small spikelets 2.5-3(-3.5) mm long; spines on flat surface of adaxial ridges of leaf appearing as indistinct or translucent spots (at $\times 20$ in living material); hairs at base of rachilla shorter than rachilla, hairs on rachilla less than half rachilla length | <i>D. parviflora</i> (Thuill.) Coss. & Germ. (diploid <i>D. cespitosa</i> of lowland woodland) |
| 3 | Plants of more open habitats with leaves bluish-green on adaxial leaf surface and larger spikelets more than 3.5 mm long; spines on flat sides of ridges on adaxial surface of leaf appearing as white spots; hairs at base of rachilla usually longer than rachilla, hairs on rachilla more than half rachilla length | (Northern diploid and tetraploid) <i>D. cespitosa</i> (L.) P. Beauv. |

Author H. A. McAllister, February 1988, minor updates 2012.