

Peppy Plants June 2013

by Eleanor Bennett

Along the banks of the Capel River is a grass which resembles the common couch. It is **Paspalum vaginatum*, commonly known as Salt Water Couch an introduced grass from the tropical and subtropical areas of the Americas (see also [Paspalum vaginatum](#)). *Paspalum* is derived from the Greek **paspalos** meaning millet and **vaginatum** from the Latin vagina meaning a sheath. Its common name, Salt Water Couch, illustrates it being associated with near saline or brackish water. It is a perennial grass with runners that reach up to 5m long, especially when growing in water. The leaf can reach up to 15cm long and 4mm wide and is often folded lengthwise, especially if under stress. The inflorescence consists of 2, occasionally 3 spreading branches up to 4cm long. The individual spikelets (consisting of 1 sterile glume and 2 flowers) are green and in 2 rows along the axis. Along the edge of the Capel River, especially just back from the cut, the runners are readily seen growing in the brackish water. Where it is grazed by kangaroos etc. or constantly walked on it resembles a coarse couch as it is short and appears to be mown.



Dense stand of Water Couch just back from the edge of the Capel River.



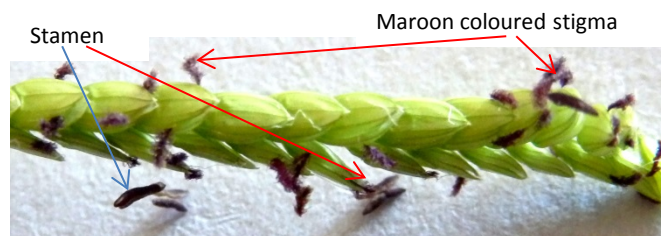
The 2-branched inflorescence is obvious when photographed in front of one of the wooden markers along the Capel River.



Note the spikelets are green and in 2 rows.



The rhizomes, with their roots covered in algae, can be seen extending into brown coloured water. The plant is growing in the mud at the side of the river.



Closer photograph of one of the branches of the inflorescence. The spikelets are bisexual and stamens and stigmas are obvious in this photograph.