

Distichlis palmeri

<i>Distichlis palmeri</i>	
Scientific classification	
Kingdom:	Plantae
(unranked):	Angiosperms
(unranked):	Monocots
(unranked):	Commelinids
Order:	Poales
Family:	Poaceae
Genus:	<i>Distichlis</i>
Species:	<i>D. palmeri</i>
Binomial name	
<i>Distichlis palmeri</i> (Vasey) Fassett ex I. M. Johnst.	

Distichlis palmeri (**Palmer's grass**), or **nipa grass**, is a saltgrass of the family Poaceae, grows in the Sonoran desert of Western Mexico, and produces a grain with some similarities to wheat. Originally a major food source of the Cocopah tribe in the western United States, it was thought to be extinct. A search for remaining plants was successful, and was followed by a breeding program that increased yield from 5kg/Ha to 2000kg/Ha. The grain is currently also being bred for commercial use in Australia. It is drought resistant and can absorb seawater. As a halophyte, the salt it absorbs is excreted from specialised cells (which are not stomata) on the leaf surface.

The United Nations Environment Report (2006) says of the plant: "It is a strong candidate for a major global food crop and could become this desert's greatest gift to the world." Some varieties of *D. palmeri* have been the subjects of US patents.^{[1][2]}

Notes and references

- [1] A variety, Yensen 1a, of *Distichlis palmeri*, characterized by vigorous growth in salty soils, high grain yield and ideal form for harvest, and for human consumption.
- [2] A grain variety, Yensen 2a, of *Distichlis palmeri*, which are characterized by vigorous growth in salty soils, high grain yield and ideal form for harvest. This grain variety has excellent taste qualities.

Article Sources and Contributors

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