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| 1 | 1. Lemma with a bent or twisted awn, this 3–10 mm long, longer than the spikelet; plants annual...2. A. ELLIOTTIANA | <i>Agrostis elliotiana</i> |
| 2 | 1. Lemma awnless or less commonly with a nearly straight awn, this 0.5–3.0 mm long, shorter than the spikelet; plants perennial (sometimes difficult to determine in small plants of <i>A. hyemalis</i>) | |
| 3 | 2. Floret with the palea absent or if present, then reduced and less than 1/2 as long as the lemma | |
| 4 | 3. Main branches of the inflorescence branched again well above the middle; leaf blades 1–2(–3) mm wide; lemma 0.5–1.5 mm long...4. A. HYEMALIS | |
| 5 | 3. Main branches of the inflorescence branched again mostly at or below the middle (sometimes slightly above the middle); leaf blades (2–)3–8 mm wide; lemma 1.2–2.3 mm long...5. A. PERENNANS | <i>Agrostis perennans</i> |
| 6 | 2. Floret with the palea present and relatively well developed, 1/2–2/3 as long as the lemma | |
| 7 | 4. Ligules 0.5–2.5 mm long, mostly shorter than wide, truncate at the tip; inflorescences with the branches and the spikelet stalks glabrous, the branches all naked (without spikelets) toward the base...1. A. CAPILLARIS | <i>Agrostis capillaris</i> |
| 8 | 4. Ligules 2–6 mm long, as long as or longer than broad, rounded at the tip; inflorescences with the branches and usually also the spikelet stalks roughened, at least some of the branches with spikelets all the way to the base (species sometimes difficult to differentiate) | |
| 9 | 5. Plants with well-developed but often short rhizomes, these with more than 3 scales; stolons absent; inflorescences open, with loosely ascending to spreading main branches at maturity...3. A. GIGANTEA | <i>Agrostis gigantea</i> |
| 10 | 5. Plants without rhizomes but with stemlike, nonscaly stolons sometimes present (or the stem bases rooting at the lowermost nodes); inflorescences usually narrow, with strongly ascending branches at maturity (sometimes relatively open when young)...6. A. STOLONIFERA | <i>Agrostis stolonifera</i> |