

Name

Anthoxanthum odoratum

Sweet vernal-grass



Habitat/Range A short-lived perennial grass common in a wide variety of habitats, most frequently acid grasslands, but also in unimproved pastures and meadows. Other acidic habitats where it thrives include heaths, dried mires and sand dunes. It is found throughout the British Isles, from sea level to 1,030 m. It avoids very dry or waterlogged soils.

Identification This is a tufted grass with erect culms 10-100 cm tall. It has quite broad and sparsely hairy green leaves. The ligules are quite long (1-5 mm) and membranous and the adjacent bases of the leaves are fringed with hairs on each side. Panicles are spike-like and narrowly oblong, individual spikelets are long and narrow, quite densely packed, and can be dark when young. The lower lemmas have long projecting awns. This grass flowers early in the season and when cut and dried has the strong coumarin smell of new-mown hay. In seed the heads dry to a bright straw yellow and are quite persistent.



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