

Ehrharta Thunb. VELDTGRASS

Ehrharta erecta Lam., PANIC VELDTGRASS. Perennial herb, often evergreen, fibrous-rooted, ± cespitose, several–many-stemmed at base, frequently branched at nodes, decumbent to spreading or ascending, in range 20–100 cm tall (tall when supported by other plants); shoots essentially glabrous to sparsely hairy and pubescent. **Stems (culms):** compressed-cylindric, to 2.2 mm diameter, tough, internodes 9–130 mm long, slightly swollen at nodes, smooth; internodes mostly hollow. **Leaves:** alternate distichous, simple and sheathing; sheath open with overlapping margins, 24–65 mm long, < internodes, strongly keeled to angled approaching blade, finely striped, unequally membranous on margins with outer margin narrower than inner margin, with lobes at top (auricles), the auricles ear-shaped and dentate, 1–3 mm long, ciliate with a hair from each tooth, the hairs 0.5–2 mm long; collar and auricle whitish to having purplish veins and margin; ligule membranous, obtuse-truncate, 1.5–4 mm long, irregularly toothed and cut on margin, splitting in age; blade linear to linear-lanceolate, 30–150 × 2.9–8 mm, of flag leaf shorter and narrower, flat (slightly inrolled), minutely toothed often from base to tip (above midpoint) and sometimes wavy or crisped from below midblade on margins, long-acuminate at tip, parallel-veined with well-defined midrib raised and forming keel on lower surface, upper surface glabrous or sparsely fine-pubescent, lower surface soft-puberulent along veins. **Inflorescence:** spikelets in terminal paniclelike, panicle (20–)60–220 × 2–420 mm, with erect, appressed to spreading and reflexed lateral branches (often on the same panicle), having to 8 nodes, lateral branches and branchlets to 5 at the lowest node, decreasing upward, the branches of different lengths at each node, 4–80 mm long; axes slender; branchlet with several stalked spikelets, each spikelet 3-flowered but only the upper floret fertile; nodes and slender axes scabrous with stiff, upward-curved short hairs, lacking awns, stalk beneath spikelet 0.7–6.5 mm long, pubescent with ascending hairs. **Spikelet:** ± ovoid slightly compressed side-to-side, 3.3–4.3 × 1.2–1.7 mm, spreading 2 mm at anthesis, with conspicuous transverse ridges on the projecting middle lemma, breaking above glumes as a unit; **glumes** 2, unequal, ovate, 1.5–2.2 mm long (lower glume) and 1.9–2.8 mm (upper glume), upper glume < spikelet and wider than lower glume, lower glume rounded on back, upper glume with low midridge and weakly keeled, light green but with membranous margins and minutely short-ciliate above midpoint, acute to narrowly obtuse at tip, 5-veined (the outermost lateral veins sometimes faint on the lower glume); **lemma** ± boat-shaped, with narrowly membranous margins, minutely gland-dotted, of lower floret 2.3–3.1 mm long and 0.5–0.6 mm wide (midvein to margin), conspicuously 3-veined at base and 5–7-veined above, short-ciliate near base; of middle floret ±oblanceolate, 2.7–3.5 mm long and 0.6–0.8 mm wide (midvein to margin), 5-veined, green, minutely lobed at base with earlike lobe hard (indurate), transversely ridged between veins for entire length or only above midpoint, puberulent at base and minutely ciliate on margins at base; of fertile upper floret lanceolate compressed side-to-side and folded along midvein, 2.6–3.1 mm long and 0.9–1.2 mm wide (midvein to margin), light green, inconspicuously 5–7-veined, memb ramous (not stiff or ridged like lemmas of sterile florets), glabrous or minutely short-ciliate at tip; **palea** (upper floret only) ± boat-shaped compressed side-to-side, 2.4–2.8 mm long, strongly keeled, mostly membranous aging scarious, 2-veined with veins very close and light green between veins, minutely

scabrous along veins. **Flower:** bisexual; **perianth (lodicules)** 2, obovoid to roundish or wedge-shaped, 0.4–0.45 × 0.35–0.4 mm, white-translucent, truncate or 2-toothed; **stamens** 6, free; filaments threadlike, ± 0.8 mm long, whitish; anthers mostly included, basifixed, dithecal, oblong, 0.6–1.1 mm long, yellow, longitudinally dehiscent; pollen light yellow; **pistil** 1, at anthesis 1.4–1.6 mm long; ovary superior, ellipsoid, 0.4–0.6 × 0.2–0.4 mm, light green, 1-chambered with 1 ovule; styles 2, exerted from lemma and palea near midpoint of spikelet, 1–1.3 mm long, thick basal portion ± 0.3 mm long, above with ca. 20 ascending, tentaclelike stigmatic hairs ± 0.5 mm long, whitish. **Fruit:** achene (caryopsis), abscised as a unit enclosed by 1 palea and 3 lemmas, resembling a closed lobster claw ± 3.5 mm long, when dry straw-colored and having conspicuous transverse ridges on the middle lemma; achene compressed-ellipsoid, 2–2.3 × 0.9–1.4 mm, almond brown with darker brown at both ends and a line along 1 edge, 1 end with an acute, asymmetric base, other end with short central point, minutely wrinkled on faces. January–December.

Naturalized. Perennial herb grass originally from South Africa that has become naturalized from gardens, especially in more or less shaded areas, but which has also invaded drainages along the moist upland edge. *Ehrharta erecta*, an unfortunate introduction to California from South Africa, grows new shoots and forms flowers whenever it has adequate moisture, and certainly in gardens can be found with leaves and in flower any week of the year. The spikelet resembles a closed lobster claw with transverse ridges on the longest (middle) lemma, and the two lemmas of the lower sterile florets have distinctive, minute basal lobes.

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