

# **The Register of Australian Herbage Plant Cultivars: delivering information for agriculture**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The Register of Australian Herbage Plant Cultivars is a valuable repository of information on the history and practice of plant breeding in Australia. It has assisted the transfer of cultivars into commercial use. The advent of Plant Breeders Rights provided a stimulus to the registration of plant cultivars for legal purposes, but plant breeders are encouraged to maintain the use of the voluntary registration system as a unique record of the origins, distinctiveness and agronomic merit of their cultivars.

## **Key words**

Plant cultivars, registration, Plant Breeders Rights.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The system of herbage plant cultivar registration was set up in the 1960s under the Standing Committee of Agriculture and Resource Management (SCARM) to assist State committees in the orderly introduction of cultivars into commercial use. Over the past 40 years registration statements have been consolidated in three hardcopy editions of the Register of Australian Herbage Plant Cultivars. The first edition, edited by C. Barnard (1), was published in 1967 and a supplement (2), "Herbage Plant Species", containing descriptions of species in which no cultivars had been registered to that date, appeared in 1969. A second edition was published in 1972 (3), with a supplement in 1982 (4). The current edition, edited by R.N. Oram in 1990 (5), contains all the previous registrations, comprising 111 grasses, 159 legumes, 15 crucifers and 4 chenopods. This third edition is no longer in print.

## **Registration information**

The originator of the cultivar presents the information in the format:

- Origin: The source of the germplasm; breeding and selection methodology used to develop the cultivar; the stages of evaluation, and the location of breeders' seed.
- Morphological description: a detailed description of the cultivar, emphasising its distinctive features in comparison with other cultivars of the same species.
- Agronomic characters: area of adaptation (soil and climate); herbage productivity and forage quality; animal performance (persistence under grazing); disease and insect resistance; seed production; agronomic management (sowing, grazing management); proposed uses (forage, hay, erosion control).

The statements are published in the *Australian Journal of Experimental Agriculture* and the relevant ones in *Tropical Grasslands*.

## **DISCUSSION**

The advent of the Plant Breeders Rights (PBR) Acts (1987, 1994) have had a profound effect on the concept and practice of cultivar registration. PBR has its own registration process that is aimed at establishing (for legal purposes) the Distinctiveness, Uniformity and Stability of a cultivar.

In relation to Plant Breeders Rights, two important benefits that the SCARM system provides are that it establishes the agronomic merit of the cultivar, and that it is acceptable for certification purposes, where PBR is not sought.

The Register of Australian Herbage Plant Cultivars is now available at the web site:

<http://www.pi.csiro.au/ahpc>. At present this contains all the grass cultivars and the legume cultivars registered after 1990.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Register of Australian Herbage Plant Cultivars remains a unique source of important information that is utilised by a number of agricultural sectors, including plant breeders, agronomists, the seed industry and educators. In recent years, many herbage plant cultivars that have been protected in the PBR system have not been registered in the voluntary system. It is hoped that plant breeders will be more aware of the advantage of registering cultivars in both systems.

## **REFERENCES**

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