Cyperus exaltatus

Family: Cyperaceae

Species: *Cyperus exaltatus* Retz.

Common Names: None provided

Synonyms: *Cyperus racemosus* Heyne

Bayer Code: CYPEX

Description: A very robust perennial (Haines and Lye, 1983) with crowded culms up to 1 cm thick and 1.5 m high arising from a short, thick, woody rhizome. The leaves are all basal, up to 80 cm long by about 1 cm wide. The inflorescence is up to 30 cm x 40 cm, subtended by leafy bracts up to 60 cm long and 1 cm wide. The individual spikelets are 6–12 mm long by 1.5 mm wide, 12–20-flowered, the glumes about 2 mm long, ovate-elliptic, reddish brown to golden with 2–3 nerves on each side of an excurrent green midrib. The spikelets are arranged in spikes, about 4 cm long x 2 cm wide consisting of 15–60 spikelets. Some of these are sessile, but most are in clusters on inflorescence branches 5–20 cm long. There are three stamens and three style branches, and the nutlet is trigonous, about 1 mm long x 0.5 mm wide, grayish and smooth.

Figure 1. *Cyperus exaltatus* from Haines and Lye (1983)
Figure 2. *Cyperus exaltatus* from Auld and Medd (1992)*


**Distribution:** *Cyperus exaltatus* is a pantropical species occurring on all the major continents. It is native in Asia (India, Nepal), Africa (Burkina Faso, Cote d’Ivoire, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, Tanzania, and Uganda), the Americas (South America), and Australasia (Australia) (Haines and Lye, 1983; Holm et al., 1979; Hooper and Napper, 1972; Lazarides et al., 1997; Siwakoti and Varma, 1995).
Biology and Ecology: *Cyperus exaltatus* is a plant of swamps, irrigation channels, and open water. Due to the production of large numbers of very small seeds, the chance of establishment and spread along water courses appears high. *Cyperus exaltatus* has been listed as a “principal” weed in India by Holm et al. (1979) and is included as a weed of Australia by Lazarides et al. (1997). Its worldwide, pantropical distribution suggests a wide latitude in adaptation.

Possible Pathways to the United States: Accidental entry is not especially likely, but *Cyperus exaltatus* is grown as an ornamental and is available on the internet from sites in France and Australia. This makes its introduction highly possible. Lazarides (1997) refer to its use as a fodder, suggesting some risk of deliberate introduction also for this purpose.

Adverse Impact: Its robust growth could lead to serious competitive effects on native vegetation in swamps, irrigation channels, and open water.

Literature Cited:

Fowler, G. 2002. Distribution Map. USDA, APHIS, PPQ, Center for Plant Health Science and Technology, Raleigh, NC.


