

2021 October *Guess that Plant*



Panicum verrucosum Muhl., Warty Panic grass

The October *Guess that Plant* is a facultative grass common to New Jersey's acidic Coastal Plain habitats. This grass is a native wetland annual distributed in the Central and Eastern United States. Mary Hough (1983) maps the species in New Jersey south of Middlesex and Mercer Counties. The grass is frequent on the open moist sands of the Pine Barrens as well as other disturbed acidic habitats south of the Raritan River.

The plants is not visible until late July and early August when the spikelets appear. The species' characteristic identifying feature is the presence minute tubercles on the spikelets. The "warts" are visible without a hand lens. The panicle is diffuse and weakly supported on the expanding culm, creating the view of an intertwined carpet of fine branches.

Some modern taxonomists have assigned the name *Kellochloa verrucosa* (Muhl.) Lizarazu, Nicola and Scataglini to the plant that been identified within the realm of the genus *Panicum* for more than 200 years. A 2015 publication proposes elevating the members of the section *Verrucosa* to their own genus based on genetic characters. Morphologically, the plant is a *Panicum*, and the deconstruction of the genus based on obscure genetic coding is not sufficient, in this botanist's eyes, to the benefit of the science in light of its nomenclatural heritage.

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