**Phyllostachys nigra**

**Scientific Name**

*Phyllostachys nigra* (Lodd. ex Lindl.) Munro

**Synonyms**

*Bambusa nigra* Lodd. ex Lindl.

**Family**

Gramineae (South Australia)

Poaceae (Queensland, New South Wales, the ACT, Victoria, Tasmania, Western Australia and the Northern Territory)

**Common Names**

bamboo, black bamboo, timber bamboo

**Origin**

Native to southern China.

**Cultivation**

Widely cultivated as a garden ornamental in Australia.

**Naturalised Distribution**

This species is naturalised in some parts of eastern Australia (i.e. occasionally in the coastal districts of central New South Wales and sparingly in south-eastern Queensland).

Also naturalised in eastern USA (i.e. Georgia, South Carolina, Tennessee, West Virginia and Virginia), La Réunion, New Zealand and Hawaii.

**Habitat**

An occasional weed of riparian vegetation, disturbed sites, waste areas, roadsides, gardens and urban bushland in sub-tropical and warmer temperate environments.

**Habit**

An upright (i.e. erect) bamboo with stems growing 3-7 m tall. Plants spread rapidly forming loose clumps via creeping underground stems (i.e. rhizomes) that produce upright stems (i.e. canes) from their joints (i.e. nodes).

**Distinguishing Features**

- a loosely clumping bamboo with blackish or purplish-black coloured mature stems growing 3-7 m tall.

- these stems (1-4 cm thick) the stems are grooved above where the side branches emerge.

- it spreads rapidly via creeping underground stems which produce upright stems from their joints.

- its elongated leaf blades (6-12 cm long and 9-15 mm wide) have very narrow stalk-like bases.

- it rarely if ever produces flowers or seeds.

**Stems and Leaves**

The upright stems (i.e. erect canes) are greenish when young but turn blackish or purplish-black in colour as they age. These stems (usually 1-4 cm thick) are banded with horizontal rings at the joints (i.e. nodes) and are grooved lengthwise (i.e. longitudinally) between the joints (i.e. the internodes).
The leaves are alternately arranged, but clustered on short shoots which grow from the branches. They have a sheath surrounding the stem and the base of the leaf blade is very narrow, and stalk-like in appearance (i.e. pseudo-petiolate). The leaf sheaths are mostly hairless (i.e. glabrous), except near their margins. Where the leaf sheath meets the leaf blade there is a tiny membranous structure topped with hairs (i.e. the ligule is a ciliate membrane). The leaf blades (6-12 cm long and 9-15 mm wide) are oblong or elongated (i.e. lanceolate) in shape, have entire margins, and are mostly hairless (i.e. glabrous).

**Flowers and Fruit**

Flowers and seeds are very rarely, if ever, produced and so are not described here.

**Reproduction and Dispersal**

This plant mainly reproduces vegetatively via suckers from its elongated creeping underground stems (i.e. rhizomes).

It spreads laterally from deliberate garden plantings into nearby bushland areas and its creeping underground stems (i.e. rhizomes) may also be dispersed in soil and dumped garden waste.

**Environmental Impact**

Black bamboo (*Phyllostachys nigra*) is regarded as an environmental weed in New South Wales.

**Legislation**

This species is declared under legislation in the following states and territories:

- **New South Wales**: Class 3 - a regionally controlled weed. The relevant local control authority must be promptly notified of the presence of this weed and it must be fully and continuously suppressed and destroyed (on Lord Howe Island only), Class 4 - a locally controlled weed. The growth and spread of this species must be controlled according to the measures specified in a management plan published by the local control authority and the plant may not be sold, propagated or knowingly distributed (in the Blue Mountains, Hornsby, Hunters Hill, Ku-ring-gai, Lane Cove, Manly, Mosman, Newcastle, North Sydney, Parramatta, Pittwater, Ryde, Warringah and Willoughby local authority areas). This declaration also applies to all rhizomatous bamboos (i.e. *Phyllostachys* spp.).

- **Western Australia**: Unassessed - this species is declared in other states or territories and is prohibited until assessed via a weed risk assessment (throughout the entire state).

**Similar Species**

Black bamboo (*Phyllostachys nigra*) is very similar to madake (*Phyllostachys bambusoides*) and golden bamboo (*Phyllostachys aurea*), and relatively similar to giant reed (*Arundo donax*). These species can be distinguished by the following differences:

- **black bamboo** (*Phyllostachys nigra*) has blackish or purplish-black coloured mature stems that are usually 1-4 cm thick. These stems have a distinctive groove running lengthwise from above where the side branches are produced. Its relatively small leaf blades (up to 15 cm long) have a short stalk-like (i.e. pseudo-petiolate) constriction at their base and sometimes a few bristles (i.e. setae) are present near the top of the leaf sheath. Flowers are very rarely produced.

- **madake** (*Phyllostachys bambusoides*) has greenish or yellowish coloured mature stems that are usually 6-20 cm thick. These stems have a distinctive groove running lengthwise from above where the side branches are produced. Its relatively small leaf blades (up to 10 cm long) have a short stalk-like (i.e. pseudo-petiolate) constriction at their base and several black bristles (i.e. setae) are present near the top of the leaf sheath. Flowers are very rarely produced.

- **golden bamboo** (*Phyllostachys aurea*) has greenish-yellow or golden coloured mature stems that are usually 2-3 cm thick. These stems have a distinctive groove running lengthwise from above where the side branches are produced. Its relatively small leaf blades (up to 10 cm long) have a short stalk-like (i.e. pseudo-petiolate) constriction at their base and several black bristles (i.e. setae) are present near the top of the leaf sheath. Flowers are very rarely produced.

- **giant reed** (*Arundo donax*) has greenish coloured stems that are up to 4 cm thick. These stems are rounded and do not have any lengthwise grooves. Its very large leaves (up to 80 cm long) are not constricted at the base of the leaf blade. Flowers are regularly borne in very large, feathery, whitish coloured open panicles at the tops of the stems (i.e. culms).
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