

AVENA

The four species of *Avena* most often found are not difficult to separate once is familiar with the characters to look for. In the species where spikelets disarticulate, this is obvious because the florets break off from the rhachilla with a clean, elliptical scar at the base. In *A. fatua*, each floret has a scar so that the spikelet disarticulates between each of the florets. In *A. sterilis*, only the lowest floret has a scar, so that at maturity the spikelet disarticulates at the top of the lowest joint of the rhachilla just above the glumes and the florets all fall off attached together as one unit. In the remaining species, the crop plants, *A. sativa* and *A. strigosa*, the florets have no scar and the species requires threshing for dispersal. Any attempt to separate the florets from the glumes or from each leaves an irregular fracture and not a smooth scar.

A detailed account of *Avena* in V.c. 46 is given by Chater (1993). Stace's *New Flora* also includes the rare alien *A. barbata*.

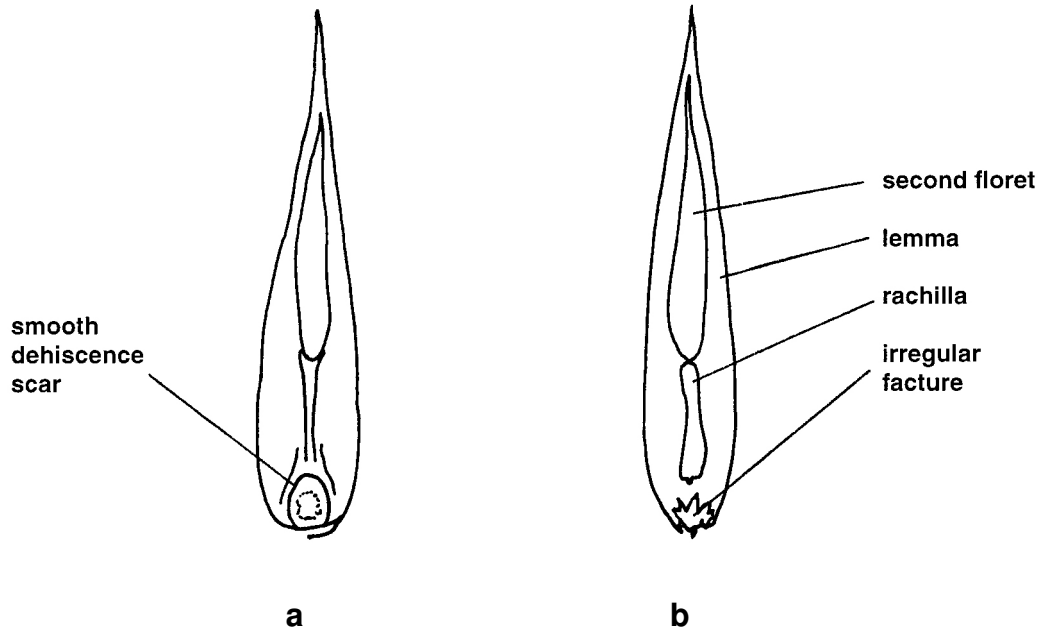
- 1 At least the lowest floret with a prominent oval smooth dehiscence scar at the base (Fig. a), the spikelet disarticulating above the glumes at maturity 2
- 1 Florets without a dehiscence scar, the spikelet not disarticulating above the glumes at maturity 4

- 2 All florets with a dehiscence scar and falling separately at maturity *A. fatua* L.
- 2 Only the lowest floret with a dehiscence scar and the florets falling as a group (*A. sterilis* L.) 3

- 3 Glumes 30-50 mm long; lowest lemma 25-40 mm long *A. sterilis* L. subsp. *sterilis*
- 3 Glumes 25-30 mm long; lowest lemma 20-25 mm long
A. sterilis L. subsp. *ludoviciana* (Durieu) Gillet & Magne

- 4 Tip of lemma with 2 finely-awned teeth, the straight awns 3-9 mm long (these in addition to the central geniculate awn 20-35 mm long arising from the middle of the back of the lemma)
A. strigosa Schreb.
- 4 Tip of lemma with 2 acute teeth or shortly mucronate (with or without an awn on the back)
A. sativa L.

Plant Crib



Florets of (a) *A. fatua*, (b) *A. sativa*.

Reference Chater, A. O. (1993). *BSBI Welsh Bulletin* 55: 7-14.

Author T. A. Cope, March 1988, updated A. O. Chater, December 1997.