

CAUSTIS

Description: Rhizomatous perennials. **Culms** terete, often rather bulbously thickened at base. **Leaves** reduced to sheaths along, and at the base of, the culm. **Inflorescence** as long as or longer than culms, occasionally functionally unisexual (on the same plant), with numerous 1-grooved to flattened branches, the ultimate spikelet-bearing branchlets elongating with maturity. **Spikelets** with 1 bisexual or female flower, often with a male below it. **Glumes** 3-6, spirally arranged, usually puberulous on adaxial surface near apex, lower glumes empty, uppermost occasionally reduced or empty. **Perianth** absent. **Stamens** 3-6. **Style** 3-5-fid; style base narrow-conical to pyramidal, thick, hispid at apex, smooth and shining below, persistent on nut. **Nut** trigonous to terete, readily deciduous, glabrous, with a narrow elongated neck between body of nut and style base.

Distribution and occurrence: World: c. 7 species, endemic Australia. Australia: all States except N.T. Note: nut length includes the narrow neck below the style base as well as the broader body. The distribution of male and female flowers and spikelets varies greatly. What appear to be functionally male and female inflorescences can occur on culms side by side on the same rhizome. The life cycle of these plants needs study.

Key to the genus <i>Caustis</i>		
1	Ultimate branches of inflorescence strongly curled to flexuous, at least in female inflorescences	2
	Ultimate branches of inflorescence straight, erect or drooping	3
2	Stamens 3 or 4; ultimate branches similarly curly in all inflorescences; few sterile ultimate branches present	<i>Caustis flexuosa</i> ST
	Stamens 5 or 6; ultimate branches of 'female' inflorescence more curly than in 'male'; numerous sterile ultimate branches present in 'female' inflorescences	<i>Caustis recurvata</i>
3	Style 3-fid; numerous sterile ultimate branches in inflorescence, giving a rather dense, erect, finely leafy appearance; stamens 3 or 4; leaf sheaths not wrinkled; glumes 5–7.5 mm long	<i>Caustis blakei</i>
	Style 4- or 5-fid; few sterile ultimate branches in inflorescence, giving an open, drooping, wiry appearance; stamens 5; leaf sheaths wrinkled near apex with maturity; glumes 9–13 mm long	<i>Caustis pentandra</i>

Caustis flexuosa, Curly Wig

Synonyms: *Caustis restiacea* F.Muell. ex Benth.

Description: Perennial with short rhizome. Culms scabrous to smooth, 15-90 cm long, 1.5-2.5 mm diam. Leaf sheaths dark red-brown to dark grey-brown. Inflorescence with 7-14 distant clusters of branches, 20-80 cm long, ultimate branches strongly curled to flexuous. Spikelets 2- (rarely 1-) flowered, 6-10 mm long, often +/- falcate. Glumes 4 or 5 (rarely to 7), long-acute, mostly mucronate, dark red-brown, glabrous or sparsely puberulous, margins hyaline and glabrous, 6-10 mm long. Stamens 3 or 4; anthers 3.7-4.5 mm long, excluding appendage 0.3-0.5 mm long. Style 3-fid; persistent style base 1.5-3 mm long, dark purplish red. Nut narrow-ellipsoid to ellipsoid, 3.5-5 mm long, 1.8-2.5 mm diam., whitish to straw-coloured, coarsely and irregularly reticulate, punctulate.

Flowering: spring-summer.

Distribution and occurrence: Grows in dry sclerophyll forest on sandy soils, derived from sandstone or granite; coast and tablelands, extending west to the Warrumbungle Ra. and near Mudgee. NSW subdivisions: NC, CC, SC, NT, CT, ST, NWS, CWS. Other Australian states: Qld Vic.