

Opizia stolonifera Presl., in Honduras ¹

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In October of 1960 the writer was privileged to be a member of a group of agricultural scientists observing dairy and beef cattle operations in Honduras. One of the ranches visited was the Tela Railroad Company Manacal Ranch, located near San Pedro Sula.

During the ranch inspection the writer was asked to identify a low-growing, stoloniferous, sod-forming grass that was established in the lawn of the headquarters building. The grass appeared very similar to the North American "buffalograss", *Buchloe dactyloides* (Nutt.) Engelm., both in general habit and in being monoecious or dioecious, with the male spikelets on short unilateral branches elevated above the leafy portion of the plant. (Plate I). The female spikelets however, were born in short spikes, instead of capitate, bur-like clusters as in *Buchloe dactyloides*. Further, they disarticulated individually instead of falling together as a "bur".

Close examination of the female spikelet shows it to be comprised of two thin glumes, the first very short, a single fertile floret, and a 3-awned rudiment, with the rachilla bearing the rudiment fused to the back of the palea (Plate 2, Fig. 3). The lemma has a thickened, sparsely hairy body and an apex of four rounded lobes of tissue separated by three stout awns. The awns, especially the lateral two, are flattened and flared at the base. The palea together with the dorsally fused rachilla and 3-awned rudiment appears much like a second floret (Plate 2, Fig. 4). The two nerves of the palea are fused with the rachilla below but above separate and curve forward to help form a thickened, flattened, winged "roof-like" structure. The caryopsis is enclosed in the membranous lateral portions of the palea..

Although the male spikelet is superficially similar to that of *Buchloe dactyloides*, it differs basically from that of this species in having only one floret instead of 2 (Plate 2, Fig. 2).

(1) Technical Bulletin N^o T. A. 1052, Texas Agricultural Experiment Station, College Station, Texas.

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Inquiry about this grass brought out the fact that it had been transplanted from the golf course at La Lima, Honduras, where it apparently is established more or less as a weed.

Subsequent investigation has shown the "mystry grass" to be *Opizia stolonifera* Presl., previously reported only from southern Mexico and Cuba (Hitchcock, A. S. "Mexican Grasses in the U. S. National Herbarium", Contr. U. S. Nat. Herb., 17 (3):353. 1913; Swallen, J. K., "Poaceae" in North American Flora, 17(8):635. 1939. Similar to *Buchloe*, *Opizia* is a monotypic genus, with only the one species described. *Buchloe* and *Opizia*, together with the Mexican genus *Pringleochloa* that also is represented by only one species, form a closely related complex that perhaps should be treated as one genus.

The writer is indebted to Mr. Cappel, Head of the Tela Railroad Company Livestock Department of the Manacal Ranch and to Agron. Antonio Herrera H., of the San Pedro Sula STICA office for their assistance in obtaining information concerning this grass. To Dr. A. T. Semple of the I.C.A., Turrialba, Costa Rica, goes the credit for first noting the colony of *Opizia* on the Manacal Ranch. Specimens of the writers collection made on the Manacal Ranch, October 27, 1960, are on file in the Tracy Herbarium of the A & M. College of Texas (Gould 9487).



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Plate 1. Habit sketch (x 1) of *Opizia stolonifera* showing stoloniferous habit and separate male and female inflorescences.

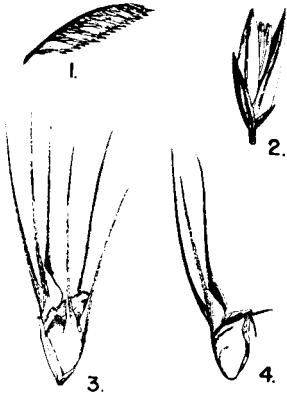


Plate 2. Fig. 1. Male inflorescence branch (x 3). Fig. 2. Male spikelet with single floret (x 10). Fig. 3. Female spikelet (x 10). Fig. 4. Palea and rudiment of female spikelet (x 10), with stigmas protruding at upper right portion of palea and outline of caryopsis visible.