

RESEARCH ARTICLE

INFRAGENERIC CLASSIFICATION OF FESTUCA L. IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Festuca L. is one of the largest genera in the grass-family Poaceae accounting for about 640 species distributed in all continents. In India most of the species are found in the higher altitude areas of Eastern and Western Himalayas, North-East India, very often in the inaccessible areas and mostly grows in the moist hill slopes and rock crevices, alpine grasslands. Clayton and Renvoize (1986) had classified the genus *Festuca* L. into 9 subgenera namely- Drymanthele, Helleria, Hesperochloa, Obtusae, Schedonorous, Subulatae, Festuca, Subuliflorae and Xanthochloa. An Infra-generic classification of the genus *Festuca* L. in India has been represented here. The following subgenera Drymanthele, Hesperochloa, Schedonorous, Subulatae, Festuca had their representatives in India, of them most of the species (24 species + 2 varieties + 1 subspecies) belongs to the Subgenus: Festuca, others (13 species) are included within subgenera: Drymanthele, Hesperochloa, Schedonorous, Subulatae.

KEYWORDS: Poaceae, grasses, infra-generic, *Festuca*.

Introduction

Festuca L. is one of the largest genera in the grass-family Poaceae (subfamily Pooideae, tribe Poeae), accounting for about 640 species distributed in all continents (Kerguelen and Plonka, 1989; Watson and Dallwitz, 1992). The genus shows a great diversity and is widely distributed across the northern hemisphere and in grassland communities of the southern hemisphere, but restricted to higher altitudes in subtropical and tropical regions (Clayton and Renvoize, 1986; Watson and Dallwitz, 1992). In India most of the species are found in the higher altitude areas of Eastern and Western Himalayas, North-East India, very often in the inaccessible areas and mostly grows in the moist hill slopes and rock crevices, alpine grasslands. *Festuca* L. generally comprises of tufted grasses and being cosmopolitan in

distribution forms an important component of grass ecosystems of the temperate zone as well as alpine grasslands of the tropical zone (Stančík and Peterson, 2007).

Festuca L. is characterized by typical features of the tribe such as by its caespitose or rhizomatous perennial habit with plicate, involute or flat leaves, paniculate inflorescences, possession of a pooid-type, 4–5-flowered spikelet with subequal glumes and a sterile terminal floret, lower glume is usually 1-nerved, the upper one is wider, usually 3-nerved, several florets, and 5-nerved lemmas with or without a terminal or sub-terminal awn and other specific attributes such as an overall dorsally rounded lemma and linear hilum running to the length of caryopsis (Clayton and Renvoize, 1986, Hackel, 1882; Macfarlane and Watson, 1982;

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