

Short communication

New additions to the alien flora of Italy: *Paspalum flavescens* (Roseng., B.R.Arrill. & Izag.) P.R.Speranza & G.H.Rua and *Paspalum inconstans* Chase (Poaceae: Panicoideae)

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Abstract - Authors report the presence in Italy of two new South American species of the genus *Paspalum* (Poaceae) joining 8 species from the same origin + 1 from temperate East Asia. As regards the Poaceae family, the genus in question is undoubtedly the most represented in the non-native contingent of Italian flora, showing a strong predisposition to *extra patriam* diaspora and a high receptivity by Italian soil due to a great climatic diversity. *P. flavescens* (from the *P. dilatatum* species complex) is a 14-year-old collection from Pozzallo coast (Sicily, Ragusa province), while *P. inconstans* is a recent find from Vercelli (Piedmont). About the causes of a so frequent South American *Paspalum* species occurrence, two possibilities are outlined: 1) grassing with unselected seed from international trade containing disseminules of a wide variety of sources; 2) involuntary transfer from overseas related to Latin American immigration.

Key words: Italy, new alien species, *Paspalum*, Poaceae.

Riassunto - Nuove aggiunte alla flora aliena d'Italia: *Paspalum flavescens* (Roseng., B.R.Arrill. & Izag.) P.R.Speranza & G.H.Rua e *Paspalum inconstans* Chase (Poaceae: Panicoideae).

Gli autori segnalano la presenza in Italia di due nuove specie sudamericane del genere *Paspalum* (Poaceae), che si aggiungono a 8 della stessa provenienza + 1 dell'Asia orientale temperata. Per quanto riguarda la famiglia Poaceae, il genere in questione è senza dubbio il più rappresentato nel contingente alloctono della flora italiana, mostrando una forte predisposizione alla diaspora *extra patriam* e un'elevata recettività da parte del suolo italiano grazie alla grande diversità climatica del territorio. *P. flavescens* (complesso di *P. dilatatum*) è una raccolta di 14 anni fa del litorale di Pozzallo (Sicilia, Ragusa), mentre *P. inconstans* è un recente reperto dell'area di Vercelli (Piemonte). Sulle cause di queste comparse, come già le precedenti di *Paspalum* del Sudamerica, vengono delineate due possibilità: 1) inerbimenti con sementi non selezionate del commercio internazionale contenenti disseminuli delle più svariate provenienze; 2) trasferimento involontario da oltre-oceano legato specialmente all'immigrazione latino-americana.

Parole chiave: Italia, nuove specie aliene, *Paspalum*, Poaceae.

The genus *Paspalum* cumulatively includes 356 species distributed in Tropical and Subtropical Asia to Pacific as well as in the Americas (POWO, 2025). As regards the Poaceae family (excluding Bambusoideae), *Paspalum* appears to be the main cause of the naturalization and casualization of alien grass species

in Italy, leaving aside issues relating to invasiveness, which are largely influenced by personal interpretation of local reporter, as can be deduced from an analysis of the data reported in Galasso *et al.* (2024). Among casual, naturalized and invasive (Richardson *et al.*, 2000), as many as 11 *Paspalum* species currently grow wild in Italy, to be precise 9 (Galasso *et al.*, 2024) + 2 discussed in this paper. Secondly, again referring specifically to Poaceae, in descending order of contribution to the number of alien species, *Paspalum* is followed by *Cenchrus* (7), *Eragrostis* (7), *Panicum* (5), *Sporobolus* (5), *Bothriochloa* (4), *Chloris* (4), *Eleusine* (3), *Muhlenbergia* (3) and no other genus of grasses is currently represented by more than two naturalized or casual species. It should be noted that the establishment of alien grasses seems to occur almost exclusively in the Panicoideae and Chloridoideae subfamilies. As for *Paspalum*, one species comes from the Old World (*Paspalum thunbergii* Kunth ex Steud.), the others from the Americas with a large South American representance.

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Fig. 1 - *Paspalum flavescens* (Roseng., B.R.Arrill. & Izag.) P.R.Speranza & G.H.Rua.

Both recent arrivals have been documented through collections (Figs. 1, 2) that are being catalogued in the Herbarium of the Natural History Museum of Milan (MSNM). The species were identified using the keys of Zuloaga & Morrone (2005) and Allen & Hall (2025).

Paspalum flavescens (Roseng., B.R.Arrill. & Izag.) P.R.Speranza & G.H.Rua, in Syst. Bot. 47: 129 (2022). (Fig. 1).

≡ *Paspalum dilatatum* subsp. *flavescens* Roseng., B.R.Arrill. & Izag., in Bol. Fac. Agron. Univ. Montevideo 103: 7 (1968).

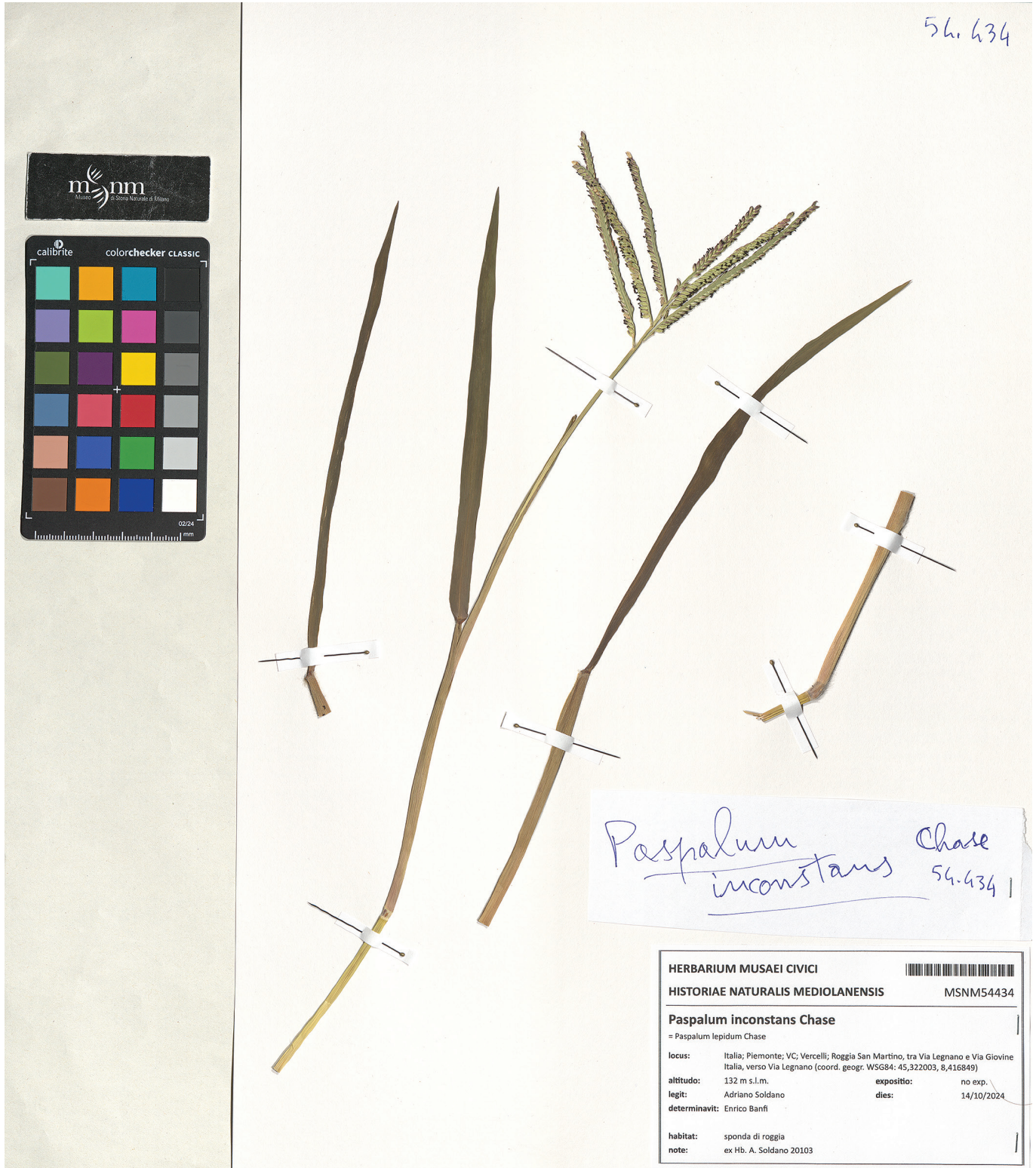


Fig. 2 - *Paspalum inconstans* Chase.

Collector: A. Soldano.

Date: July 28, 2011.

Place: Pozzallo (Sicilia, province of Ragusa), 36.729767°N, 14.854350°E, 3 m.

Habitat: flower beds at the edge of Pietrenere waterfront.

Specimens: MSNM barcode MSNM54435 ex *Hb. A. Soldano* 15553.

This presence has been confirmed until 2018 without it being possible to say whether, seven years later, the species still exists in that area or has become extinct, due to a lack of monitoring. The species belongs to the *P. dilatatum* complex (Rosso et al., 2022) where it is distinguished, among other characters, by the light yellow rather than purplish anthers. It is native to South and East Uruguay and Argentina (provinces of Buenos Aires and Córdoba).

Paspalum inconstans Chase (Fig. 2).

= *Paspalum lepidum* Chase

Collector: A. Soldano.

Date: October 14, 2024.

Place: Vercelli (Piemonte), between Via Legnano and Via Giovine Italia, 45.322003°N, 8.416849°E, 132 m.

Habitat: wet bank of an irrigation ditch.

Specimens: MSNM barcode MSNM54434 ex *Hb. A. Soldano* 20103; *Hb. A. Soldano* Nos. 21103, 21105, 21106.

This species, which differs from others found in Italy by presence of the lower glume (best seen in the proximal spikelet of each pair) and a robust habit with linearly subovate blade rounded at base, is native from Venezuela to Argentina. At the place of this find, *P. inconstans* seems to be well established with a robust, rather extensive stand, i.e., the species appears to be naturalized, despite the constant risk of tampering with its habitat.

The unusually frequent occurrence of South American *Paspalum* species in Italy in recent decades, in our opinion, can be attributed to following two causes: 1) grassing with unselected trade grass seed mixtures easily containing *Paspalum* disseminule with a large prevalence of South American species, 2) a specially increased Latin American human immigration resulting in the unintentional transfer of disseminule from overseas.

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