

New native grass species have been discovered on the Iberian Peninsula and Menorca

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The team of researchers from the project Flora ibericaX(2) have discovered two new native grasses on the Iberian Peninsula and in

Menorca, respectively. These two species, which are new to science, have been featured in *Systematic Botany*. The article is the fruit of the collaboration between the Area of Botany and the University of Seville Herbarium, the Systematic and Evolution Unit for Vascular Plants at the Autonomous University of Barcelona, and researchers from other institutions in the Balearic Islands.

The new [species](#) belong to the genus *Aira*, delicate herbaceous plants, which enjoy their greatest diversity in the Mediterranean Region. One of them, *Aira minoricensis* is a native species of the siliceous sands of Menorca, where it was collected for the first time in 2014 by the botanist Pere Fraga, curator of the Marimutxa Botanical Garden (Blanes) and great expert on the island's flora. The other [new species](#) is called "*Aira hercynica*" and is widely found in the area of the Iberia Peninsula which approximately coincides with the Iberian Massif (which is also called the Hesperic or Hercynian Massif) and the mountains that surround it. It is, therefore, a [common species](#), which had previously been confused with other species. Its discovery is product of the experience in grass taxonomy of the University of Seville teacher, Carlos Romero Zarco, who, in 2016, identified for the first time the existence of two different species which had previously been considered just one.

The article, coordinated by the teacher Llorenç Sáez (Autonomous University of Barcelona), includes a detailed morphometric study, together with structural, ecological and distribution data, as well as the state of conservation of the population of the species (in accordance with the categories of the International Union for Conservation of Nature), which has shown the clear separation of these two species with regard to those already known in the Mediterranean Region.

"Currently, team continues working on this genus to try to clarify the relationship between these species by means of molecular markers," states the researcher Carlos Romero.

More information: Llorenç Sáez et al. Two New Species of Aira (Poaceae) from the Iberian Peninsula and the Balearic Islands, *Systematic Botany* (2020). [DOI: 10.1600/036364420X15801369352324](https://doi.org/10.1600/036364420X15801369352324)

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