

Chionochloa rubra subsp. cuprea

COMMON NAME

copper tussock

SYNONYMS

None (first described in 1991)

FAMILY

Poaceae

AUTHORITY

Chionochloa rubra subsp. cuprea Connor

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Grasses

NVS CODE

CHIRSC

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 42

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Not Threatened

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: South Island (North Canterbury and south and west to Fiordland) and Stewart Island.

HABITAT

Coastal to alpine. Inhabiting bogs and tussock grassland where it may be the dominant tussock.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FAC: Facultative

Commonly occurs as either a hydrophyte or non-hydrophyte (non-wetlands).



Mossburn. January. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Takitimu Mountains, Southland. Photographer: Jesse Bythell, Licence: CC BY-NC.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Tall, slender, red tussock with crowded, erect, stiff, rush-like leaves. **Leaf-sheath** to 300 mm, dark brown, keeled, incurving, remaining entire, inter-ribs with minute hairs sometimes glabrous, margin separating and coiling, apical tuft of hairs to 3 mm. **Ligule** to 1 mm. **Leaf-blade** to 1 m long and 1.2 mm diameter, persisting on sheath, acicular rush-like, splitting longitudinally, keel hollow, underside glabrous but infrequently with long hairs near base, prickle-teeth towards apex, upper surface with dense wefts of long hairs at base, extending up leaf-blade often with short hairs as well, papillae or prickle-teeth; margin with long hairs below, prickle-teeth above. **Culm** to 1.5 m, internodes glabrous, sheath glabrous. Inflorescence to 45 cm, open on pulvinate branches, glabrous except for long hairs at branch axils and short stiff hairs below spikelets, rarely becoming scabrid above. **Spikelets** of up to 9 florets. **Glumes** glabrous, acute, infrequently awned, adjacent lemma lobes, lower to 12 mm, 1–3–5-nerved, upper to 14 mm, 3–5–7-nerved. **Lemma** to 6 mm; hairs dense on margin less so in internerves, usually absent or sparse elsewhere, < sinus; lateral lobes to 7 mm including awn to 3.5 mm, infrequently long triangular-acute; central awn to 13 mm from twisting column to 3 mm. **Palea** to 8 mm. **Callus** to 1.5 mm, hairs to 4 mm. **Rachilla** to 0.75 mm. **Lodicules** to 1 mm. **Anthers** to 5 mm. **Ovary** to 1 mm; stigma-styles to 4 mm. **Seeds** to 3.5 mm.

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

[Key to the grasses of New Zealand](#)

SIMILAR TAXA

Morphologically distinguished from the rest of the *Chionochloa rubra* Zotov complex by the entire leaf-sheath and other minor floral differences.

FLOWERING

October–December

FRUITING

November–April

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easy from fresh seed and the division of whole plants. However, can be slow growing and dislikes warm, humid climates and drought. Though once established it can take plenty of abuse. The reddish leaves are especially attractive.

ETYMOLOGY

chionochloa: Snow grass

rubra: Red

cuprea: From the Latin cupreus 'copper', meaning 'coppery'

WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (June 2005). Description modified from Edgar and Connor (2000).

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Edgar E, Connor HE. 2000. Flora of New Zealand. Vol. V. Grasses. Christchurch, Manaaki Whenua Press. 650 p.

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/chionochloa-rubra-subsp-cuprea/>