Agrostis imbecilla

COMMON NAMES
feeble bent

BIOSTATUS
Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | Data Deficient | Qualifiers: Sp
Jump to previous conservation statuses

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Grasses

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Delicate, slender, tufted perennial plants (100–)150–350 mm tall, with long, rather fine, spike-like panicles on slender culms > overtopping leaves. **Leaf-sheath** narrow, membranous, light cream-brown to reddish, glabrous, distinctly ribbed. **Ligule** 0.8–1.6 mm, obtuse, lower surface glabrous. **Leaf-blade** 20–130 × 0.2–0.4 mm, involute, filiform, flaccid, undersides finely striate and, in young leaves scabrid, upper surface scabrid on ribs; margins scabrid, apex tapered, blunt. **Culm** filiform, erect or geniculate at base, internodes glabrous. **Panicle** (25–)50–90 × 2–3 mm, contracted, narrow-linear, pale purple. **Spikelets** 1.5–2.4 mm, pale greenish purple or pale yellow. **Glumes** equal, lanceolate, scabrid on keel and on margins near acute tip. **Lemma** 1.5–1.9 mm, glabrous, 5-nerved, ovate-oblong, apex denticulate, usually without awns, if present these up to 1 mm, scarcely projecting beyond glumes. **Palea** 0.1–0.2 mm, ovate. **Callus** with few minute hairs. Anthers 0.6–1 mm.

SIMILAR TAXA
A distinctive species characterised by its very fine, rather slender panicles, and rather lax to flaccid leaves.

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic. North Island, one record from Moawhango. South Island, infrequent in Canterbury and Otago

HABITAT
A montane, subalpine to alpine species of damp sites within tussock grassland.

THREATS
Not directly threatened, but listed because it is a naturally uncommon species of sporadic occurrence.

GENUS
Agrostis

FAMILY
Poaceae

AUTHORITY
Agrostis imbecilla Zotov

SYNONYMS
Agrostis tenella Petrie non Hoffm.

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
Unknown

FRUITING
Unknown

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL
Florets are dispersed by wind and water (Thorsen et al., 2009).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Easy from fresh seed and rooted pieces but will not flower without cold treatment. In humid climates it is difficult to maintain

ETYMOLOGY
agrostis: Greek name for a kind of grass
imbecilla: Weak

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY
Key to the grasses of New Zealand

NVS CODE
AGRIMB

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 42

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2017 | Data Deficient | Qualifiers: Sp
2012 | Data Deficient | Qualifiers: Sp
2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon
2004 | Sparse
Jump to current conservation status

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES
Otago: 2025 | Regionally Data Deficient | Qualifiers: TL Help
The regional threat classification system leverages off the national assessments in the NZTCS, providing information relevant for the regional context. Otago conservation status information is sourced from the "Conservation Status of Indigenous Vascular Plants in Otago, 2025" Jarvie S et al. (2025) report.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING
Edgar E, Connor HE. 2000. Flora of New Zealand. Vol. V. Grasses. Christchurch, Manaaki Whenua Press. 650 p.
Thorsen MJ, Dickinson KJM, Seddon PJ. 2009. Seed dispersal systems in the New Zealand flora. *Perspectives in Plant Ecology, Evolution and Systematics 11*: 285–309.

ATTRIBUTION
Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange June 2005. Description modified from Edgar and Connor (2000)
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MORE INFORMATION
https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/agrostis-imbecilla/

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