Amphibromus fluitans

COMMON NAMES
water brome

BIOSTATUS
Native

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: DPR, DPS, TO
Jump to previous conservation statuses

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Grasses

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Somewhat flaccid to weakly tufted, stoloniferous, semi-aquatic grass, forming circular grey-green mats 70–400 × 150 mm on muddy ground (up to 400 mm tall when growing up through surrounding vegetation). **Culms** decumbent, rooting at lower nodes, erect or floating above. **Leaf-sheath** papery, smooth or scabrid, often wholly scabrid toward culm apex. **Ligule** 1.5–5 mm, long-tapered, acute, initially entire, becoming lacerate. **Leaf-blade** 50–125 × 0.6–3 mm, grey-green, flat or inrolled, upper surface somewhat scabrid, shallowly ribbed, undersides notably more scabrid and prominently ribbed, apex acute. **Culm** internodes mostly smooth, rarely scabrid below nodes. **Panicle** 65–13 mm, erect, initially enclosed below by uppermost leaf-sheath, at fruiting often expanding entirely above leaves; branches and pedicels scabrid. **Spikelets** 15–25 mm, 3–6-flowered, pale green. **Glumes** unequal, glabrous, obtuse margins ciliate-scabrid; lower 2–3 mm, 1-nerved, narrowly lanceolate, upper 2–4 mm, 3-nerved, ovate-lanceolate. **Lemma** 4–5.5 mm, 7-nerved, firm, green, margin rather wide, hyaline, minutely scabrid or hairy; lemma lobes 2, obtuse; awn 7–18 mm, straight, arising from lemma midpoint. **Palea** < lemma, keels stiffly ciliate, interkeel glabrous. **Seeds** 1.5–2 × 0.5–0.7 mm.

Close up of spikelets, Lake Wairarapa, Boggy Pond. Photographer: Colin C. Ogle, Licence: CC BY-NC.

SIMILAR TAXA
Sterile specimens of creeping bent (*Agrostis stolonifera* L.) are most similar and often grows in the same habitat. Creeping bent has fleshy leaves and the leaf blade tends to be wider than the sheath. Kneed foxtail (*Alopecurus genicuatus* L.) is also similar in the vegetative state but it is larger and coarser. Sweetgrasses (*Glyceria* species) have long thin (often blue-green coloured) leaves with cross-veinlets and they tend to float on water.

Ex cult. Lake Whangape, (grown at Auckland Regional Botanic gardens). Photographer: Bec Stanley, Licence: CC BY-SA.

DISTRIBUTION
Indigenous. New Zealand, North and South Islands. In the North Island It is known from Ninety Mile Beach and Karikari Peninsula to Paekakariki and Lake Wairarapa. In the South Island known only from Maher's Swamp, near Punakaiki and from Lake Tekapo. Present in Australia where it is very uncommon. The largest populations of the species seem to be at the Waihora and Arohaki lagoons, at Lake Rerewhakaaitu in wetlands on the north eastern and eastern margin of Lake Wairarapa.

HABITAT
Coastal to montane in moderately fertile, seasonally dry wetlands or along the edges of shallow lakes and lagoons.

THREATS
Habitat loss through wetland drainage, stock grazing and competition from weeds.

GENUS
Amphibromus

FAMILY
Poaceae

AUTHORITY
Amphibromus fluitans Kirk

SYNONYMS
Amphibromus gracilis P.Morris of Australia is now regarded as a synonym of A. fluitans.

ENDEMIC TAXON
No

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
September - May (dependent on water levels)

FRUITING
September-July (dependent on water levels)

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

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Easily grown from fresh seed and the division of rooted pieces. Can be grown in dry ground but prefers damp soil. Good in a pot, and an unusual and attractive grass for a pond or slow flowing stream.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING
OBL: Obligate Wetland
Almost always is a hydrophyte, rarely in uplands (non-wetlands).

EXTRA INFORMATION
Story in in *Trilepidea* issue 30 (May 2006).

ETYMOLOGY
fluitans: From the Greek fluito (floating)

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

NVS CODE
AMPFLU

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 42

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2017 | Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: DP, TO
2012 | Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: EF, TO
2009 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered | Qualifiers: EF, TO
2004 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered
Jump to current conservation status

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Auckland: 2025 | Regionally Extirpated | Qualifiers: TO Help
Current regional threat status assessments prepared according to Crisp et al. (2025) are displayed when available. The Auckland conservation status information is sourced from the "Conservation status of vascular plant species in Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland" Simpkins E et al. (2025) report.
Otago: 2025 | Regionally Threatened – Regionally Critical | Qualifiers: DPR, DPS, DPT, EF, NR, RR Help
Current regional threat status assessments prepared according to Crisp et al. (2025) are displayed when available. The Otago conservation status information is sourced from the "Conservation Status of Indigenous Vascular Plants in Otago, 2025" Jarvie S et al. (2025) report.
Northland: 2026 | Regionally Extirpated Help
Current regional threat status assessments prepared according to Crisp et al. (2025) are displayed when available. The Northland conservation status information is sourced from the "Conservation status of indigenous vascular plants in Northland | Taitokerau" Ford et al. 2026 report.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Edgar E, Connor HE. 2000. Flora of New Zealand. Vol. V. Grasses. Christchurch, Manaaki Whenua Press. 650 p.
Gardner, R. 2000. Notes towards an excursion Flora.*Amphibromus fluitans* (Poaceae). *Auckland Botanical Society Journal 55*: 54–55.
Ogle, C.C. 1987. A rarely seen native grass *Amphibromus fluitans*. *Wellington Botanical Society Bulletin 43*: 29–32.
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

Description modified from Edgar and Connon (2000).

MORE INFORMATION

https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/amphibromus-fluitans/

PDF DATE

15 July 2026