

Anemanthele lessoniana

COMMON NAME

gossamer grass

SYNONYMS

Agrostis lessoniana Steud., *Oryzopsis lessoniana* (Steud.) Veldkamp, *Agrostis procera* A.Rich., *Dichelachne procera* Steud., *D. rigida* Steud., *Oryzopsis rigida* (Steud.) Zotov, *Agrostis rigida* A.Rich., *Apera arundinacea* Hook.f., *Stipa arundinacea* (Hook.f.) Benth., *Apera purpurascens* Colenso

FAMILY

Poaceae

AUTHORITY

Anemanthele lessoniana (Steud.) Veldkamp

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

Yes

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Grasses

NVS CODE

ANELES

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 40-44

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2018 | At Risk – Relict

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: DP, Sp

2009 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: DP

2004 | Sparse

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. North Island, North Auckland, Waikato and southern third of the island. South Island from Nelson and Marlborough south, mainly in the east. Also occurs as a cultivation escape in some places, e.g., Auckland City.

HABITAT

Sea level to montane forest, forest margins, scrub and on cliff faces and associated talus.



Seedling. Naturalised on basalt lava flow. Auckland. Feb 2007. Photographer: Peter de Lange



Naturalised on basalt lava flow. Auckland. Feb 2007. Photographer: Peter de Lange

FEATURES

Erect, tufted, shortly rhizomatous perennial, bearing densely leafy culms surmounted by delicate, nodding panicles. Leaf-sheath to 150 mm, outer margin ciliate. Ligule 1.5 mm, asymmetrical, entire to fimbriate. Leaf-blade 450 x 6 mm, stiff, involute or flat, upper surface shining, apex acute, undersides smooth, dull, margins scabrid. Culm to 750 mm, simple, erect to nodding, internodes smooth, occasionally scabrid below panicle. Panicle 600 mm; purplish-red or green, branches capillary, spreading, whorled; rachis slender, smooth to scaberulous, branches and pedicels scaberulous. Spikelets laterally subcompressed, pale green to purplish. Glumes subequal, 2.5-3.5 mm, hyaline, acute to acuminate, keel scabrid; lower linear-lanceolate, 1-nerved, upper elliptic-lanceolate, 1-3-nerved. Flowers perfect. Lemma 2 mm, 3-nerved, elliptic-oblong, awn to 8 mm, scabrid, curved, caducous. Callus minute, rounded, ringed by very minute hairs. Anther 1, 0.8-1.4 mm, apically thickened.

SIMILAR TAXA

A most distinctive and singular species which could only be confused with the common introduced grass *Piptatherum miliaceum* (L.) Coss. From that species *Anemanthele* is most readily distinguished by its spikelets which have laterally subcompressed rather than dorsally compressed florets bearing one rather than three stamens.

FLOWERING

(October-) January (-March)

FRUITING

(November-) February (-May)

LIFE CYCLE

Florets are dispersed by wind (Thorsen et al., 2009).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easy from fresh seed, often naturalises in gardens and can become very invasive. Can be grown in a variety of situations but does best in dry soil in full sun or partial shade under trees. Does not like damp soils.

ETYMOLOGY

lessoniana: Named after René Primevère Lesson who was a 19th century French botanist and surgeon

WHERE TO BUY

Very common in cultivation and sold by most plant retail nurseries, though often under a variety of incorrect names.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared by P.J. de Lange for NZPCN (1 June 2013)

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Thorsen, M. J.; Dickinson, K. J. M.; Seddon, P. J. 2009. Seed dispersal systems in the New Zealand flora. *Perspectives in Plant Ecology, Evolution and Systematics* 2009 Vol. 11 No. 4 pp. 285-309

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/anemanthele-lessoniana/> (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/anemanthele-lessoniana/>