Anthosachne aprica

COMMON NAMES
blue wheat grass

BIOSTATUS
Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: Sp, DPS, DPT
Jump to previous conservation statuses

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Grasses

FLOWER COLOURS
Violet/Purple, Yellow

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Erect, glaucous, and tufted. **Leaf-sheath** 70-100 mm, keeled striate, becoming fibrous, glabrous, sparsely hairy or pubescent, margins papery. **Ligule** 0.3–0.5 mm, ciliate. **Leaf-blade** 200–300 × 2–4 mm, glaucous, flat, ribbed, sometimes involute, upper surface glabrous, or with occasional 1 mm long hairs, undersides densely hairy, lamina margin prickle-toothed, occasionally with sparse hairs up to 1 mm long. **Culms** 0.5–1 m, erect, nodes conspicuous, black or red-brown. **Inflorescences** 180–250 mm, stiff, erect, of 3–7 spreading spikelets. **Spikelets** 30–50 mm, each with 6–12 (or more) florets. **Glumes** ± equal, 5–10 mm, 3-nerved, acute or shortly awned, margins papery, ciliate. **Lemma** 10–14 mm, glabrous with some prickle-teeth above, apex occasionally bifid, awn 22–45 mm, recurved or straight. **Palea** 6–13 mm, apex bifid. **Rachilla** 2–3 mm, short stiff hairy. **Callus** 0.75 mm, incompletely and shortly bearded. **Anthers** 4–9 mm purple or yellow.

SIMILAR TAXA
Morphologically superficially similar to *Connorochloa tenuis,* from which it differs by the erect culms rather than long trailing culms, with the uppermost internodes short, spikelets widely spreading (divergent) from rachis, and 4–9 mm long, purple to yellow anthers. *Anthosachne aprica* is a stout grass with conspicuous erect flower heads bearing long-awned spikes that are held at a distinct angle to the stem. Aside from *Connorochloa* it could possibly can be confused with some exotic *Bromus* spp. that also have long awns (but these often have hairy leaves, and green rather than blue-green coloured spikes, and the edges of the spikes are sharply delineated, not rounded as in *Anthosachne*. This species previously regarded as an *Elymus* is now accepted as a member of *Anthosachne* (see Barksworth & Jacobs (2011)).

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic. South Island, Central Otago only

HABITAT
A species of inland basins where it grows in short tussock (*Festuca novae-zelandiae* (Hack.) Cockayne) grasslands at elevations of 150–200 m.

THREATS
A local endemic, that while not believe to be threatened occupies a very narrowly defined range that is ever increasingly vulnerable to loss of habita through the expansion of the wine industry in Central Otago.

GENUS
Anthosachne

FAMILY
Poaceae

AUTHORITY
Anthosachne aprica (Á.Löve et Connor) C.Yen et J.L.Yang

SYNONYMS
Elymus apricus Á.Löve et Connor

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
October–February.

FRUITING
November–April

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

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Easy from fresh seed and the division of whole plants. Dislikes humidity and does best in full sun, in a well drained soil.

WHERE TO BUY
Not commercially available.

ETYMOLOGY
aprica: From the Latin aperire 'open', meaning uncovered

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

NVS CODE
ANAAPR

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 42

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DP, Sp
2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: Sp
2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon
2004 | Range Restricted
Jump to current conservation status

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES
Otago: 2025 | Regionally Threatened – Regionally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: DPR, DPS, DPT, NStr, PF, RE, Sp, 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
Barkworth ME, Jacobs SWL. 2011: The Triticeae (Gramineae) in Australasia. *Telopea* 13: 37–56.
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. Feature description adapted from Edgar & Connor (2000).

MORE INFORMATION

https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/anthosachne-aprica/

PDF DATE

07 June 2026