

Anthoxanthum equisetum

COMMON NAMES

holy grass

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Grasses

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. South and Stewart Islands only. Nelson and Marlborough sparse, common from Canterbury south.

HABITAT

An alpine species of stream sides, damp flushes, seepages, tarn margins and cushion bogs, often within tussock grassland.

GENUS

Anthoxanthum

FAMILY

Poaceae

AUTHORITY

Anthoxanthum equisetum (Zotov) de Lange & C.J. James

SYNONYMS

Hierochloe equiseta Zotov

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

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

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FAC: Facultative

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

ETYMOLOGY

equisetum: From the Latin equus 'horse' and setum 'bristle', the barren growths resembling horses' tails.

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

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

NVS CODE

HIEEQU



CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 41

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

[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

Johnson AT, Smith HA. 1986. Plant Names Simplified: Their pronunciation, derivation and meaning. Landsman Bookshop Ltd, Buckenhill, UK.

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.

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/anthoxanthum-equisetum/>

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