Austroderia splendens

COMMON NAMES
toetoe

BIOSTATUS
Native – Endemic taxon

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

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Grasses

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Generally a robust, stout, rhizomatous tussock forming grass up to 6 m tall when in flower. **Leaf-sheath** clothed in long hairs, pale green, copiously covered in white wax. Ligule 3 (or more) mm long, contra-ligule (line of hairs at the leaf blade/culm junction) present. **Leaf-blade** 2–3(–4.8) × 0.3–0.5 m, yellow-green, green to dark-green, upper side glabrous, underside basally with dense weft of hairs, this becoming sparse toward midribs, trending toward mintuely hairy throughout. **Culm** up to 6 m, inflorescence portion up to 1 m tall, erect to nodding, plumose. **Spikelets** numerous, 40 mm with 2–3 florets per spikelet. Glumes equal, 40 mm with awn-like apex, > florets. **Lemma** 11 mm, 3-nerved, scabrid. **Palea** 9 mm, keels ciliate. **Callus** hairs 4 mm. **Rachilla** 1 mm. **Flowers** either perfect or female. **Anthers** of perfect flowers 6 mm, in females 4 mm. **Ovary** of perfect flowers 0.7 mm, stigma-styles 2 mm; female flowers with ovary 1 mm, stigma-style 4 mm. **Seed** 4–5 mm.



Hikurua / de Surville Cliffs, North Cape. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 26/02/2011, Licence: CC BY.

SIMILAR TAXA
This species can be distingushed from the other native Austroderia species best by the leaf blade, which is densely hairy above the ligule, and by the 3 mm (or more) long ligule, and presence of a contra-ligule. For distinctions from the naturalised Cortaderia see notes under Austroderia toetoe.



Lake Morehurehu. Photographer: Lisa Forester, Licence: CC BY-SA.

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic. A northern species common from the Three Kings Islands south to about Waikawau in the west and Ohiwa Harbour in the east—exact southern limit unclear.

HABITAT
Abundant in coastal situations, within dunefield, associated shrublands, on cliff faces and on offshore islands.

THREATS
Abundant and not threatened. Often naturalising in suitable habitats.

GENUS
Austroderia

FAMILY
Poaceae

AUTHORITY
Austroderia splendens (Connor) N.P.Barker et H.P.Linder

SYNONYMS
Cortaderia splendens Connor

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
Yes

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
September–November

FRUITING
October–March

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

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Easily grown from fresh seed (as a revegation exercise ripe seed heads can be pinned to soil surface, and if kept damp, soon germinate) and division of established plants.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING
FAC: Facultative
Commonly occurs as either a hydrophyte or non-hydrophyte (non-wetlands).

CULTIVATION
Uncommon in cultivation. Occasionally offered by specialist native plant nurseries.

EXTRA INFORMATION
Two ecotypes exist, a small form typical of coastal cliff faces and rocky islets, and a robust form confined to active and semi-consolidated dune field. The robust form, from which the type specimen was selected, is rhizomatous, and produces very large (2–3(–6) m) culms which push through sand, and so in cultivation can be recognised because the culms soon flop and fall over without support. The small ecotype (which some consider as a distinct, as yet undescribed species) is not rhizomatous, and has a more compact growth form, otherwise in leaf, ligule, flower, and seed characters it matches the robust form.

ETYMOLOGY
splendens: Splendid

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

NVS CODE
AUSSPL

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 90

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2017 | Not Threatened
2012 | Not Threatened
2009 | Not Threatened
2004 | Not Threatened
Jump to current conservation status

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Auckland: 2025 | Regionally At Risk – Regionally Declining | Qualifiers: DPR, DPS, DPT, PF, RR Help
The regional threat classification system leverages off the national assessments in the NZTCS, providing information relevant for the regional context. Auckland conservation status information is sourced from the "Conservation status of vascular plant species in Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland" Simpkins E 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 1 October 2006. Description adapted from Edgar & Connor (2000). Some of this factsheet information is derived from Flora of New Zealand Online and is used under a Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 New Zealand licence.

MORE INFORMATION

https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/austroderia-splendens/

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