

Austroderia toetoe

COMMON NAME

toetoe

SYNONYMS

Cortaderia toetoe Zotov

FAMILY

Poaceae

AUTHORITY

Austroderia toetoe (Zotov) N.P.Barker et H.P.Linder

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

Yes

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Grasses

NVS CODE

AUSTOE

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 90

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2012 | Not Threatened

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. Confined to the North Island where it grows from about Carters Beach (western Waikato) south to Wellington. There are reports of it from the Waitakere Ranges that require further investigation. It has been planted and has sparingly naturalised on Waiheke Island. Not naturally occurring in the Tongariro-Taupo region on the Volcanic Plateau, but has naturalised from plantings e.g. on the Pihanga Saddle.

HABITAT

Common in freshwater swamps and wet places from sea level to lower montane habitats. Often growing in association with flax/harakeke (*Phormium tenax*).



Ligule. Wainuiomata River mouth.
Photographer: Jeremy Rolfe



Toetoe. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth

FEATURES

Stout, tussock-forming grass up to 4 m tall when in flower. Leaf sheath glabrous, ivory with green midrib, copiously covered in white wax. Ligule 4 mm. Collar dark brown, upper surface clothed in short hairs. Leaf blade 2(-3) m x 3 cm, straw-yellow, light-green, rarely dark-green, undersides long hairy toward margins, upper surface with a thick weft of hairs at base, otherwise minutely hairy through, and rather harsh due to numerous prickly-teeth. Culm up to 4 m, inflorescence portion up to 1 m tall, stiff, erect, densely plumose. Spikelets numerous, 25 mm with 2-3 florets per spikelet. Glumes equal, 25 mm, > florets. Lemma 10 mm, 3-nerved, scabrid. Palea 6.5 mm, keels ciliate. Callus hairs 1.5 mm. Rachilla 0.5 mm. Flowers either perfect or female. Anthers of perfect flowers 4.8 mm, in females 2.8 mm. Ovary of perfect flowers 1 mm, stigma -styles 1.8 mm; female flowers with ovary 1.3 mm, stigma-style 3.5 mm. Seed 2.5-3 mm.

SIMILAR TAXA

Easily identified by the stout, erect, densely plumose inflorescences, and ivory leaf sheaths. Separated from South American Pampas grasses (*Cortaderia* species) by their spring or summer flowering, rather than autumn flowering habit, waxy leaf sheaths, and by the dead leaves which fold longitudinally, and disarticulate in their entirety - the South American species curl up toward the leaf base, ultimately decaying to a state resembling wood shavings. Pampas grasses can always be distinguished by their brittle leaves with a prominent midrib - fold a leaf across and it snaps or can be torn easily. *Austroderia* leaves have multiple ribs and cannot be torn across easily.

FLOWERING

November - February

FRUITING

October - March

LIFE CYCLE

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

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

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

THREATS

Abundant and not threatened. Often naturalising in suitable habitats.

WHERE TO BUY

Uncommon in cultivation and generally too robust for urban gardens. Occasionally offered by specialist native plant nurseries.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 1 October 2003. Description adapted from Edgar & Connor (2000).

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Edgar, E.; Connor, H.E. 2000: Flora of New Zealand. Vol. V. Grasses. Manaaki Whenua Press, Christchurch.
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* 11: 285-309

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/austroderia-toetoe/>