

# Austroderia turbaria

## COMMON NAMES

Chatham Island toetoe

## BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: IE, RR, RF

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

## CATEGORY

Vascular

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Grasses

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Tall, hermaphrodite, tussock of wetlands. **Leaf-sheath** inter-nerves and margins conspicuously hairy. **Ligule** 2 mm. **Collar** underside glabrous, top side sparsely hairy. **Leaf-blade** up to 1.5 × 0.15 m, glaucous, tapering to long, thin point; under surface with long inter-rib hairs, upper surface with conspicuous, dense, weft of hairs at base otherwise glabrescent; lamina margins scabrid. **Culm** to 2 m, internodes glabrous. **Inflorescences** 400–800 mm, dense, plumose, drooping, branches and pedicels covered in copious long hairs, these longer than spikelet. **Spikelets** with 2 florets. **Glumes** equal, 25 mm or less, 1-nerved, thin; upper with 10 mm or less hairs, lower less hairy or glabrous. **Lemma** 9 mm. **Palea** 7 mm, long-hairy, apex hair-tipped, keels ciliate. **Callus** hairs 3 mm. **Rachilla** 1 mm, glabrous. **Anthers** 1.7–2.6 mm. **Gynoecium** with ovary to 0.8 mm, stigma-styles 2.5 mm. **Seeds** ovate, rugose, 3 mm.

## SIMILAR TAXA

*Austroderia turbaria* is the only species of the genus native to the Chatham islands. It is allied to *A. splendens* Connor, which is endemic to the northern North Island. From that species it can be distinguished by its long-hairy leaf-sheaths, and hermaphrodite flowers. *Austroderia fulvida* and *A. richardii* have also been planted on the Chatham Islands, again *A. turbaria* is easily distinguished from these by its hairy leaf-sheaths and hermaphrodite flowers.

## DISTRIBUTION

Endemic to the Chatham Islands. Found on both Chatham and Pitt Islands.

## HABITAT

A species usually found on the margins of slowly flowing streams draining peat bogs, or on lake margins. It has also been found in light wells created by tree falls within swamp forest.

## THREATS

This plant is one of the most threatened in the Chathams archipelago. As of 2005 there are ten wild populations and 344 mature plants known. These occur in often small and widely fragmented locations and so remain highly vulnerable to catastrophic events. Browsing and trampling by cattle is a major problem, and the species is also greedily devoured wherever sheep and pigs can reach it. There is some indication that fungal diseases such as Fusarium wilt may have been responsible for the recent near loss of this species from the northern part of Chatham Island. Fire, floods and competition from other vegetation are also threats. The species is also at some risk through hybridism with species of New Zealand toetoe that have been introduced to the Chatham Islands.



In cultivation ex Pitt Island. Oct 2007.  
Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Licence: CC BY.



Flower head. Photographer: Hugo Baynes,  
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## GENUS

Austroderia

## FAMILY

Poaceae

## AUTHORITY

Austroderia turbaria (Connor) N.P.Barker et H.P.Linder

## SYNONYMS

Cortaderia turbaria Connor

## ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

## ENDEMIC GENUS

Yes

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## FLOWERING

October–January

## FRUITING

December–July

## LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

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

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

*Austroderia turbaria* is easily cultivated and does best in a sunny, sheltered site on permanently damp, peaty or acid soil. It is inclined to be rather short-lived (2–5 years) and will not tolerate drought. It is easily grown from fresh seed which germinates readily. Seed appears to have little viability if stored for longer than a year.

## WHERE TO BUY

Occasionally sold by some specialist native plant nurseries.

## PLANT OF THE MONTH

This plant has been featured as a Plant of the Month – see [Trilepidea: NZPCN newsletter for May 2004](#) for the full story.

## MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

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

## NVS CODE

AUSTUR

## CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 90

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered | Qualifiers: CD, IE, RF, RR

2012 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered | Qualifiers: CD, IE, RF, RR

2009 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered | Qualifiers: CD, RF, IE, RR

2004 | Threatened – Nationally Critical

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

## 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-turbaria/>

### **PDF DATE**

27 May 2026