

Chionochloa acicularis

COMMON NAMES

needle snow tussock

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Grasses

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Tall, slender, erect, pedicelled tussock, with sharp-pointed, glabrous, deciduous leaves. **Leaf-sheath** to 120 mm, dark above, pale shining below, persistent, becoming chartaceous, keeled, clothed with long (3 mm) abundant deciduous hairs, apical tuft of hairs to 7 mm. **Ligule** to 0.5 mm. Leaf-blade to 500 × 1 mm diameter, acicular rush-like, thickened at midrib, disarticulating at ligule, abaxially glabrous, adaxially with dense very short stiff hairs below, papillae and occasionally some prickly-teeth above; margin smooth. **Culm** to 600 mm, long and short hairs below inflorescence otherwise glabrous. **Inflorescence** to 100 mm, spikelets few; rachis, branches and pedicels abundantly long hairy especially at branch axils. **Spikelets** of up to 7 golden florets. **Glumes** becoming acute or mucronate, glabrous, > adjacent lemma lobes; lower to 11 mm, 3-nerved, upper to 13 mm, 5-nerved. **Lemma** to 5 mm; dense hairs at margin and erect hairs aside central nerve or rarely between all nerves, ± reaching sinus; lateral lobes to 4 mm, triangular-acute; central awn to 14 mm from divergent flat column to 2 mm. **Palea** to 7 mm. **Callus** to 1 mm, hairs to 2.5 mm. **Rachilla** to 0.5 mm. **Lodicules** to 1 mm. **Anthers** to 4 mm. **Ovary** to 0.8 mm; stigma-styles to 2 mm. **Seeds** to 3 mm.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: South Island (South Westland and Fiordland).

HABITAT

Lowland to upper montane. On peaty soils in grasslands, and scattered through scrub

THREATS

A naturally uncommon, regional endemic.

GENUS

Chionochloa

FAMILY

Poaceae

AUTHORITY

Chionochloa acicularis Zotov

SYNONYMS

None

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes



Franklin Mountains, Fiordland. Photographer: John Barkla, Date taken: 15/11/2012, Licence: CC BY.



Franklin Mountains, Fiordland. Photographer: John Barkla, Date taken: 13/11/2012, Licence: CC BY.

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

October–December

FRUITING

November–February

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

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

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from fresh seed and rooted pieces. Prefers a permanently damp, acidic soil and semi-shade. Plants must never be allowed to dry out.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FAC: Facultative

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

WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available

ETYMOLOGY

chionochloa: Snow grass

acicularis: From the Latin *acicula* 'small pin' refers to things which are needle-like, needle-shaped, stiff or pointed

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

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

NVS CODE

CHIACI

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

$2n = 42$

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: DP

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Range Restricted

[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

Description modified from Edgar and Connor (2000)

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/chionochloa-acicularis/>

PDF DATE

27 May 2026