

Chionochloa australis

COMMON NAMES

carpet grass

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Grasses

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Compact, mat-forming grass with persistent, short leaves densely crowded in tight shoots among many old sheaths, and much shorter than flowering culms. **Leaf-sheath** to 70 mm, imbricate, persistent, entire, becoming fibrous and separating into two distinct layers when old, shiny, glabrous, long (7 mm) entangled hairs at apex usually spreading across proximate sheath, adaxially with antrorse, soft, internerve hairs to 0.25 mm; margins undulating and usually glabrous. **Ligule** to 1.5 mm, often obscured by hairs of sheath and leaf-blade. **Leaf-blade** to 100.0 × 0.8 mm, acicular junceous, persistent, navicular, ± terete, distichous rarely mono-stichous, abaxially shining, glabrous, adaxially with a dense weft of long hairs at base, hairs gradually becoming fewer and shorter above, usually projecting beyond leaf margin, abundant papillae above; margin smooth. **Culm** to 400 mm, internodes glabrous except for short hairs below nodes and long hairs below inflorescence. **Inflorescence** to 50 mm; 3–5 solitary spikelets on short, flexuous, long hairy, pulvinate branches. **Spikelets** of up to 8 often purpled florets. **Glumes** to 14 mm, glabrous, acute or mucronate, frequently purpled, > adjacent lemma lobes; lower 3-nerved, upper 5-nerved. **Lemma** to 5 mm; hairs dense at margin and erect aside main nerve, usually absent or fewer elsewhere, approximately equal to sinus; lateral lobes to 7 mm including awn up to 4 mm, sometimes shortly lobed again, glabrous except for prickly-teeth above; central awn to 15 mm, reflexed from flattened to strongly twisting column to 4 mm. **Palea** to 7 mm. **Callus** to 1 mm, hairs to 2.5 mm. **Rachilla** to 1 mm. **Lodicules** to 1 mm. **Anthers** to 4 mm. **Ovary** to 0.8 mm; stigma-styles to 3 mm. **Seeds** to 3 mm.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: South Island (Nelson to Canterbury).

HABITAT

A conspicuous upper montane to alpine species forming dense mats in herbfields, tussock grasslands, and occasionally cushion bogs.

GENUS

Chionochloa

FAMILY

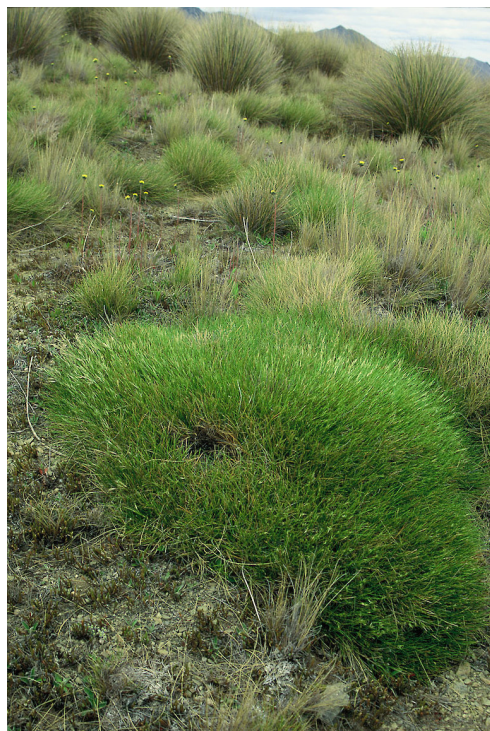
Poaceae

AUTHORITY

Chionochloa australis (Buchanan) Zotov



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SYNONYMS

Danthonia raoulii subsp. australis Buchanan; Danthonia australis (Buchanan) Buchanan

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

November–January

FRUITING

December–May

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

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

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from rooted pieces and fresh seed. Should be planted in a permanently moist soil, ideally in a cool or partially shaded situation. Dislikes humidity and will not tolerate drought.

WHERE TO BUY

Not Commercially available.

PLANT OF THE MONTH

This plant has been featured as a Plant of the Month – see [Trilepidea: NZPCN newsletter for July 2019](#) for the full story.

ETYMOLOGY

chionochloa: Snow grass

australis: Southern

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

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

NVS CODE

CHIAUS

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 42

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

[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).

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MORE INFORMATION

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

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