

# Chionochloa oreophila

## COMMON NAME

mountain snow tussock, snow patch grass

## SYNONYMS

Danthonia oreophila Petrie; Danthonia pallida Petrie

## FAMILY

Poaceae

## AUTHORITY

Chionochloa oreophila (Petrie) Zotov

## FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

## ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Grasses

## NVS CODE

CHIORE

## CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 42

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2012 | Not Threatened

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

## DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: South Island (East and West of Main Divide from Nelson to Fiordland).

## HABITAT

Subalpine to alpine. Inhabiting tussock grasslands, snow hollows and banks

## FEATURES

Small, pale tussock with persistent sheaths, and leaves very much shorter than slender flowering culms. Leaf-sheath to 50 mm, pale, shiny, glabrous, chartaceous, persistent, margins undulating, apical tuft of hairs to 3 mm. Ligule 0.5-1.0 mm. Leaf-blade to 150 × 2 mm, U- or V-shaped, persistent, spiralling, pointed, narrower than sheath, keeled, veins few, abaxially with prickle-teeth in upper 1/3, long interrib hairs frequent; adaxially with scattered prickle-teeth; margins with prickle-teeth below becoming glabrous above. Culm to 300 mm, internodes glabrous. Inflorescence to 60 mm, up to 8 spikelets on flexuous, pulvinate branches, glabrous except for few long hairs at branch axils and below spikelets. Spikelets small, solitary, of up to 6 purpled or golden florets. Glumes ± equal, to 10 mm, apex sometimes shortly awned, > adjacent lemma lobes; lower 3-5-nerved, upper 5-7-nerved, margin often long hairy below. Lemma to 4.5 mm; hairs long on margins, few aside central nerves and often few in all internerves, < sinus; lateral lobes to 4.5 mm including awn to 2.5 mm, or shortly acute-triangular; central awn to 5.5 mm reflexed from flat 1.5 mm column. Palea to 5.5 mm. Callus to 1.5 mm, hairs to 2.5 mm. Rachilla to 0.75 mm. Lodicules to 0.6 mm. Anthers to 2.5 mm. Ovary to 0.7 mm; stigma-styles to 3 mm. Seeds to 2 mm



South Temple. Photographer: John Barkla



upper Polnoon, Harris Mountains, Otago.  
Photographer: Jesse Bythell

## FLOWERING

October - November

## FRUITING

November - March

## LIFE CYCLE

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.

## ETYMOLOGY

**chionochloa:** Snow grass

**oreophila:** Mountain lover

## WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available.

## ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared by P.J. de Lange for NZPCN (1 June 2013)

## REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

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

Please cite as: de Lange, P.J. (Year at time of access): *Chionochloa oreophila* Fact Sheet (content continuously updated). New Zealand Plant Conservation Network.

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/chionochloa-oreophila/> (Date website was queried)

## MORE INFORMATION

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