

# Chionochloa rubra subsp. occulta

## COMMON NAMES

red tussock

## BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

## CATEGORY

Vascular

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Grasses

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Tall, slender, red tussock with crowded, erect, stiff, rush-like leaves. **Leaf-sheath** to 300 mm, dark brown, keeled, incurving, fracturing into short segments, inter-ribs with minute and long hairs, margin separating and coiling, apical tuft of hairs to 3 mm. **Ligule** to 1 mm. Leaf-blade to 1 m long, 1.2 mm diameter, falling with part of sheath; acicular rush-like, splitting longitudinally, keel hollow, abaxially glabrous but infrequently with long hairs near base, prickle-teeth towards apex, adaxially dense wefts of long hairs extending up leaf-blade or short hairs in rows, papillate or prickle-toothed above. **Culm** to 1.5 m, internodes sometimes long hairy, sheath glabrous. **Inflorescence** to 45 cm, open on pulvinate branches, glabrous except for long hairs at branch axils and short stiff hairs below spikelets, rarely becoming scabrid above. **Spikelets** of up to 9 florets. **Glumes** glabrous, acute, infrequently awned,  $\leq$  adjacent lemma lobes, lower to 12 mm, 1–3–5-nerved, upper to 14 mm, 3–5–7-nerved. **Lemma** to 6 mm; hairs dense on margin,  $<$  sinus; lateral lobes to 6 mm including awn to 2.5 mm; central awn to 13 mm from twisting column to 3 mm. **Palea** to 8 mm. **Callus** to 1.5 mm, hairs to 4 mm. **Rachilla** to 0.75 mm. **Lodicules** to 1 mm. **Anthers** to 5 mm. **Ovary** to 1 mm; stigma-styles to 4 mm. **Caryopsis** to 3.5 mm.

## SIMILAR TAXA

Morphologically distinguished from the rest of the *Chionochloa rubra* Zotov complex by the long weft of hairs on the upper leaf-blade surface which extends well above the ligule.

## DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: South Island (Nelson and West Coast to Cascade Plateau).

## HABITAT

Upper montane to alpine in scrubland, or as a local dominant in tussock grassland.

## GENUS

Chionochloa

## FAMILY

Poaceae

## AUTHORITY

*Chionochloa rubra* subsp. *occulta* Connor

## SYNONYMS

None (first described in 1991)



In cultivation. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 29/10/2007, Licence: CC BY.

## ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## FLOWERING

October–December

## FRUITING

November–April

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easy from fresh seed and the division of whole plants. However, can be slow growing and dislikes warm, humid climates and drought. Though once established it can take plenty of abuse. The reddish leaves are especially attractive.

## WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACW: Facultative Wetland

Usually is a hydrophyte but occasionally found in uplands (non-wetlands).

## ETYMOLOGY

**chionochloa**: Snow grass

**rubra**: Red

## MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

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

## NVS CODE

CHIRSO

## 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.

## ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (June 2005). Description modified from Edgar and 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/chionochloa-rubra-subsp-occulta/>

## PDF DATE

25 May 2026