

# Cortaderia selloana

## COMMON NAME

Pampas grass

## FAMILY

Poaceae

## AUTHORITY

*Cortaderia selloana* (Schult. et Schult.f.) Asch. et Graebn.

## FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Exotic

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Grasses

## NVS CODE

CORSEL

## CONSERVATION STATUS

Not assessed

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Robust tussock with tall erect flowering stems bearing dense heads of white to pale pink flowers.

## HABITAT

Terrestrial. A coastal and lowland plant found between sea level and 800 metres. Plant grows in sites of all levels of fertility from low to high. The plant grows in a wide variety of soils from pumice and coastal sands to heavy clay (Ford 1993). Coloniser of open ground (West, 1996). A plant that occurs in low or disturbed forest (including plantations), wetlands, grasslands, scrub, cliffs, coastlines, islands, forest margins, riverbanks, shrubland, open areas, roadsides and sand dunes. The plant's primary habitat is disturbed ground.

## FEATURES

Large-clump-forming grass to 4 m+. Leaf base smooth or sparsely hairy, no white waxy surface (cf. toetoe - *Austroderia* - species). Leaves with conspicuous midrib which does not continue into leaf base, no secondary veins between midrib and leaf edge. Leaves bluish-green above, dark green below, snap across readily when folded and tugged (toetoe species have multiple ribs in the leaves, making the leaves difficult to snap across). Dead leaf bases spiral like wood shavings, which makes pampas grasses more flammable than toetoe species. Flower head erect, dense, fluffy, white-pinkish, fading to dirty white, (Jan)-Mar-Jun.

## SIMILAR TAXA

Can be separated from native *Austroderia* (toetoe) by the prominent single midrib on the leaves (*Austroderia* species have several prominent veins.). Can be separated from *C. jubata* by the glabrous leaf bases, and the fresh flowering spike is white to pink rather than violet of *C. jubata*, and is exerted further from the clump.

## FLOWERING

March, April, May

## FLOWER COLOURS

Red/Pink, White



Plimmerton. Jun 2006. Photographer: Jeremy Rolfe



Plimmerton. Jun 2006. Glabrous leaf base. Photographer: Jeremy Rolfe

## **FRUITING**

April-May (Timmins & MacKenzie 1995).

## **YEAR NATURALISED**

1925

## **ORIGIN**

Central South America

## **REASON FOR INTRODUCTION**

Agricultural.

## **LIFE CYCLE COMMENTS**

Perennial. Seed germination occurs in autumn. The plant is dioecious with 50% female and 50% hermaphrodite plants. The plant is readily cultivated from divisions. Seed production is from 90 000 - 100 000 per seed head. It is unlikely that this plant forms a long term seed bank. Viability in the seed bank is unknown.

Seed is dispersed by gravity, man, vertebrates, machinery, in gravel (Timmins & MacKenzie 1995) and by wind. The seed is very light and is wind-dispersed up to 50km.

## **TOLERANCES**

Seedlings are intolerant to drought and slightly tolerant of frost. Seedlings are slightly intolerant to intolerant of poor drainage. Adult plants are tolerant of drought and frost. Cutting results in regrowth. Grazing results in regrowth unless it is frequent, which results in death. Burning results in vegetative regrowth and provides a seedbed for invasion from surrounding areas.

## **MORE INFORMATION**

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/cortaderia-selloana/>