

Festuca luciarum

COMMON NAMES

fescue

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Data Deficient | Qualifiers: Sp, CI, RR

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Grasses

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Short, tufted to tall stoloniferous grass; innovations extravaginal; long shoots bearing inflorescences of small panicles of few broad dark violet suffused usually patent spikelets on short prostrate to ascending culms above the shorter leaves. **Leaf-sheath** 20–80 mm, glabrous, striate, much wider than leaf-blade, brown and fibrous below, margins membranous; apical auricles 0.3–0.4 mm, rounded, ciliate. **Ligule** as for auricles. **Leaf-blade** 30–120 x 0.6–1.0 mm diameter; $\pm$ hexagonal, ribs evident or folded, glabrous, glaucous, upper surface and on margins covered in short antrorse hairs. **Culm** 40–500 mm, shoots swollen, erect or erect-ascending, usually > leaf-blades; nodes visible, internodes glabrous.

Panicle 20–100 mm, with 4–7 nodes, 5–20 spikelets; branches erect or weakly spreading, usually solitary, basal branch 20–50 mm of 1–4 spikelets, uppermost 4–5 spikelets solitary on short pedicels; rachis mostly glabrous and frequently tortuous below, branches and pedicels usually prickly-toothed. **Spikelets** 8–12 x 4–7 mm, of 4–10 florets, glaucous, dull violet suffused, imbricate, becoming evidently patent at anthesis and up to 10 mm wide. **Glumes** unequal, keeled, narrowing to become acute or acuminate, smooth but occasionally prickly-toothed on keels, apex with long cilia, margins shortly or conspicuously long ciliate; lower 2.6–3.4 mm, 1-nerved, upper 3–6 mm, 3-nerved, nerves sometimes evident. **Lemmas** 5–7 mm, lobes 0 or very short, 5-nerved, slightly keeled above, inrolled, $\pm$ prickly-toothed throughout or short stiff hairy and prickly-toothed; awn 0–1 mm; apex of lowest lemma usually awnless and often long (0.3–0.5 mm) ciliate. **Palea** 5.5–7.0 mm, usually > lemma, apex deeply (0.3–1.0 mm) bifid, keels toothed in upper 1/3 occasionally more, interkeel hairs above, margins of flanks ciliate. **Callus** 0.2–0.3 mm, shortly stiffly bearded throughout; articulation oblique. **Rachilla** 0.75–1.50 mm, with short prickly-teeth or stiff hairs. **Lodicules** 1.0–1.4 mm, greater than or equal to ovary, lobed, glabrous. **Anthers** 2.0–3.5 mm. **Ovary** 1 mm, turbinate, hispid hairs at apex or glabrous; stigma-styles 1.75–3.00 mm.

Seed 3 mm.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: North Island (eastern and inland on Raukumara Range (Mt Hikurangi, Mt Wharekia), Maungaharuru Range, and Huiaurau Range (Mt Maunga-pohatu)).

HABITAT

Montane to alpine. Usually rupestral on limestone cliffs, talus and rocks, and in associated tussock grasslands.



Habitat, Maungaharuru Range. Photographer: Kelvin Lloyd, Licence: All rights reserved.

THREATS

Range Restricted, naturally uncommon endemic known from a few widely scattered sites at high elevations in the eastern North Island. The species is still very poorly known but is currently believed to be secure at all its known sites.

GENUS

Festuca

FAMILY

Poaceae

AUTHORITY

Festuca luciarum Connor

SYNONYMS

None (first described in 1998)

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

Unknown

FRUITING

Unknown

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

Florets are dispersed by wind, water and attachment (Thorsen et al., 2009).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Unknown. In Auckland plants were easily grown from rooted pieces but did not flower and appeared to dislike drought or humidity.

WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available.

ETYMOLOGY

festuca: From the Latin festuca 'stem' or 'blade of grass'

luciarum: From the Latinised plural of Lucy, named by Henry Connor after Lucy B. Moore and Lucy Cranwell. These two women did field work together collecting this species from Maungaphouatu and were fondly referred to as the 'two Lucies' by Henry Connor and Leonard Cockayne (Connor, 1998).

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

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

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 56

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DP, RR, Sp

2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: RR, Sp

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DP

2004 | Range Restricted

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

- Connor HE. 1998. *Festuca* (Poaceae: Gramineae) in New Zealand 1. Indigenous Taxa. *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 36: 329–367.
- 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/festuca-luciarum/>

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