

# Festuca matthewsii subsp. pisamontis

## COMMON NAMES

Otago blue fescue

## BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: RR

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

## CATEGORY

Vascular

## STRUCTURAL CLASS


Grasses

## FLOWER COLOURS

Yellow

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Moderately tall short tussock with very smooth or minutely prickly-toothed fine leaf-blades, below laxly branched inflorescence of large spikelets with conspicuously awned florets. **Leaf-sheath** 25–70 mm, glabrous, striate, stramineous, margin membranous; apical auricles 0.4–1.3 mm, rounded, ciliate. **Ligule** 0.3–0.6 mm, ciliate. **Leaf-blade** 50–200 × 0.4–0.6 mm, hexagonal and ribbed or ± terete, pointed, undersides smooth or minutely imperceptibly antrorsely prickly-toothed on ribs, upper surface and margins abundantly short white antrorsely hairy. **Culm** 110–400 mm, erect, well exerted above leaf-blades; nodes visible; internodes smooth but sometimes occasionally minutely prickly-toothed. **Panicle** 25–130 mm with 5–9 nodes, 4–16 spikelets; branches solitary sometimes binate, lax, naked below, basal branch 12–55 mm, of 1–5 spikelets, uppermost 3–5 spikelets solitary on short pedicels; rachis prickly-toothed on margins throughout or sometimes glabrous below becoming scabrid above, branches and pedicels prickly-toothed.

**Spikelets** 10–15 × 3–5 mm, of 5–6 florets. **Glumes** unequal, keeled or slightly so, prickly-teeth above, usually brown or purpled centrally, margins membranous, ciliate; lower 2.8–4.0 mm, 1-nerved, long triangular acute or blunt, upper 3.5–5.5 mm, 3-nerved, narrowly ovate, obtuse to acute. **Lemma** 3.7–6.2 mm, lobes 0.1 mm, rounded, glabrous except for prickly-teeth at apex and near awn, glaucous; awn 1.2–2.5 mm. **Palea** 4.5–6.8 mm, often = lemma, acute, deeply bifid, keels toothed in upper ½–, interkeel hairs above, margins of flanks ciliate above. **Callus** 0.2–0.3 mm, margin very sparsely shortly bearded; articulation flat.

**Rachilla** 1.0–1.5 mm, short stiff antrorsely hairy. **Lodicules** 0.8–1.2 mm, lobed, usually hair-tipped. **Anthers** 2.8–3.7 mm, yellow. **Ovary** 0.6–0.9 mm, obovate, apex usually with hispid hairs; stigma-styles 1.2–1.3 mm. **Seed** 3 mm.

## DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: South Island (Central Otago: Dunstan, Pisa, and Old Man Ranges).

## HABITAT

Montane to alpine. In tussock grassland (often the dominant species), around rock outcrops, amongst scrub.



Pisa Range, Central Otago. Photographer: Kelvin Lloyd, Licence: All rights reserved.

## THREATS

Local endemic, common within its geographic region.

## GENUS

Festuca

## FAMILY

Poaceae

## AUTHORITY

*Festuca matthewsii* subsp. *pisamontis* Connor

## SYNONYMS

None (first described in 1998)

## ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## FLOWERING

October–December

## FRUITING

November–March

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from fresh seed and rooted pieces. An attractive grass tolerant of most conditions but dislikes humidity.

## ETYMOLOGY

**festuca**: From the Latin *festuca* ‘stem’ or ‘blade of grass’

**matthewsii**: After Mathews

## MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

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

## NVS CODE

FESMSP

## CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 42

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: RR

2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: RR

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon

2004 | Range Restricted

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

## REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Otago: 2025 | Regionally At Risk – Regionally Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DPR, DPS, DPT, NStr, RE, RR, St, TL  
Help

The regional threat classification system leverages off the national assessments in the NZTCS, providing information relevant for the regional context. Otago conservation status information is sourced from the “[Conservation Status of Indigenous Vascular Plants in Otago, 2025](#)” Jarvie S et al. (2025) report.

## REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Edgar E, Connor HE. 2000. Flora of New Zealand. Vol. V. Grasses. Christchurch, Manaaki Whenua Press. 650 p.

## ATTRIBUTION

Description modified from Edgar and Connor (2000).

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## MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/festuca-matthewsii-subsp-pisamontis/>

## PDF DATE

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