

Koeleria spicata

COMMON NAMES

spike trisetum

BIOSTATUS

Native

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Grasses

DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. New Zealand: South Island where it grows in high alpine situations mainly east of the divide, Chatham Islands, Auckland Islands and Campbell Island/Motu Ihupuku.

HABITAT

The mainland form grows in subalpine to alpine vegetation, typically in open rocky ground in fell field, herbfield, scree, rock outcrops, cliff faces or tussock grassland. Often found growing with *Koeleria cheesemanii* (Hack.) Petrie. The Chatham Island variant grows in dune swales. The subantarctic variant grows on peat and in rock crevices at sea level.

GENUS

Koeleria

FAMILY

Poaceae

AUTHORITY

Koeleria spicata (L.) Barberá, Quintanar, Soreng et P.M.Peterson

SYNONYMS

Aira spicata L., *A. subspicata* L., *Trisetum subspicata* (L.) P. Beauv.; *Trisetum spicatum* (L.) K.Richt.

TAXONOMIC NOTES

New Zealand *Koeleria spicatum* is very variable. Plants from the subantarctic islands are very distinct from mainland New Zealand plants, as are those from the Chatham Islands. Further study into this variation is needed.

ENDEMIC TAXON

No

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easy from fresh seed and division of whole plants. Dislikes humidity, and does best in free draining, damp soils within a cool, airy site. Excellent in an alpine house. The typical form of this species will not flower at lower altitudes unless plants are subjected to 1–2 months cold treatment.



Old Man Range, Otago. Photographer: John Barkla, Licence: CC BY.



Campbell Island. Photographer: Melissa Hutchison, Date taken: 06/01/2018, Licence: CC BY-NC.

ETYMOLOGY

koeleria: Named after George Ludwig Koeler (1765-1807), 18th century German botanist. Author of a work on the grasses of Germany and France, *Descriptio graminum in Gallia et Germania* (1802).

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

Key to the grasses of New Zealand

NVS CODE

TRISPI

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

$2n = 28$

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

Jump to current conservation status

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Otago: 2025 | Regionally Not Threatened 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.

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/koeleria-spicata/>

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27 May 2026