

# Lachnagrostis littoralis subsp. littoralis

## COMMON NAMES

coastal wind grass

## BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

## CATEGORY

Vascular

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Grasses

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Densely tufted, light green to greyish green or glaucous, annual grass 30–400 mm tall, whole plant often withering early and culms not breaking up below panicle. **Branching** intravaginal. **Leaf-sheath** finely striate, subhyaline, smooth or minutely scabrid above. **Ligule** 0.2–3.0 mm, oblong, tapered, subobtusate or denticulate, sometimes lacerate, undersides sparsely scabrid. **Leaf-blade** firm 10–80 × 1.5–5 mm, flat, or sometimes involute and 0.5 mm diameter, underside smooth or minutely papillose, rarely scabrid, upper surface minutely scabrid on ribs and margins, leaf tip acute to subobtusate. **Culm** 10–140 mm, included within leaf-sheaths, internodes finely scabrid below panicle, rarely visible until culm breaks up at maturity. **Panicle** 20–120 × 5–85 mm, delicate, ± contracted, later spreading, enclosed at base by sheath of uppermost culm-leaf; branches and branchlets ± erect, all ± equal in length, slender, sparsely scabrid, naked for much of their length, the ultimate branchlets tipped by 1–2 spikelets. **Spikelets** 2.5–6.0 mm, light green or greenish brown, slender. **Glumes** narrow elliptic-lanceolate, usually equal or the upper slightly shorter, acute to acuminate to shortly mucronate, 1-nerved, smooth, keel scabrid, margins hyaline, finely scabrid above. **Lemmas** 1.5–2.5 mm long, oblong-ovate, 5-nerved with scattered to rather dense short silky hairs, often glabrous above, lateral nerves shortly excurrent, faintly scabrid; awn 3–6 mm long, ± mid-dorsal, geniculate, slightly twisted near base. **Palea** slightly < lemma, nerves 0.1–0.2 mm apart, keels minutely excurrent, faintly scabrid at apex. **Callus** hairs dense, very short, to 0.5 mm long covering 20% of lemma. **Rachilla prolongation** minute 0.2–1.0 mm, with hair tuft 0.5–1.5 mm long. **Lodicules** 0.7 mm long, linear, acute. **Anthers** 0.3–1.0 mm. **Seed** 1.0–1.5 × 0.4–0.7 mm.

## SIMILAR TAXA

Distinguished from *Lachnagrostis littoralis* subsp. *salaria* Edgar by the geniculate rather than curved awn, and generally smaller size. *Lachnagrostis littoralis* subsp. *salaria* is confined to the eastern South Island (from North Canterbury south) and Stewart Island. It is also a much coarser grass than subsp. *littoralis*. From *L. filiformis* it differs by the ± equal lengths of the naked primary and secondary panicle branches, and by the lemma usually 1.8–3.0 mm (cf. 1.3–2.0 mm long in *L. filiformis*) and anthers 0.4–0.7 rather than 0.2–0.5 mm long. *Lachnagrostis littoralis* subsp. *littoralis* further differs from *L. filiformis* in that it is strictly coastal and usually a much smaller, more delicate, annual grass.

## DISTRIBUTION

.Endemic. Common in coastal habitats throughout the North Island, northern South Island and Chatham Islands



A few plants seen on rock cliffs above the high tide line, Whangārei Heads, Northland. Photographer: Marley Ford, Date taken: 10/11/2020, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Scattered on exposed face in coastal forest with Euchiton, Whangārei Heads, Northland. Photographer: Marley Ford, Date taken: 27/01/2024, Licence: CC BY-NC.

## HABITAT

Strictly coastal. Usually on exposed cliff faces, in coastal turf, and amongst boulders or on cobble beaches. Occasionally found in petrel scrub or in damp depressions within sand dune systems. Rarely found in estuaries on mud banks or amongst saltmarsh vegetation.

## THREATS

Not Threatened but can be uncommon over parts of its range.

## GENUS

Lachnagrostis

## FAMILY

Poaceae

## AUTHORITY

Lachnagrostis littoralis (Hack.) Edgar subsp. littoralis

## SYNONYMS

Deyeuxia forsteri var. littoralis Hack. comb. illeg., var. epithet legit., Lachnagrostis filiformis var. littoralis (Hack.) Zotov

## TAXONOMIC NOTES

Some Kermadec islands plants attributed to this species warrant further study as they appear intermediate between *L. littoralis* and *L. pilosa*.

## ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## FLOWERING

September–May

## FRUITING

October–June

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easy from fresh seed. Can become invasive.

## ETYMOLOGY

**lachnagrostis:** From “lachne” (wool) referring to the distinctive callus hairs of this genus and “agrostis” by which Trinius (1820) actually meant “a grass” (not an Agrostis). So the generic name means “a hairy (woolly) grass” not “a hairy (woolly) Agrostis” as is often incorrectly stated (see Gardner 2014).

**littoralis:** From the Latin littus ‘shore’, meaning shore-loving or growing on the shore

## MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

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

## CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 56

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

## REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Auckland: 2025 | Regionally Not Threatened | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT Help

The regional threat classification system leverages off the national assessments in the NZTCS, providing information relevant for the regional context. Auckland conservation status information is sourced from the [“Conservation status of vascular plant species in Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland”](#) Simpkins E et al. (2025) report.

## REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

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

Gardner, RO. 2014. Notes on the wind grass *Lachnagrostis filiformis* (Poaceae). [Auckland Botanical Society Journal](#) 69: 168–170.

Trinius CB. 1820. *Fundamenta Agrostographiae*. J.G.Huebner, Vienna.

## ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 14 April 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.

## NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

Please cite as: de Lange, P.J. (Year at time of access): *Lachnagrostis littoralis* subsp. *littoralis* Fact Sheet (content continuously updated). New Zealand Plant Conservation Network.

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/lachnagrostis-littoralis-subsp-littoralis/> (Date website was queried)

## MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/lachnagrostis-littoralis-subsp-littoralis/>

## PDF DATE

08 June 2026