

Microlaena stipoides

COMMON NAME

meadow rice grass, slender rice grass

SYNONYMS

Ehrharta stipoides Labill.; *Microlaena stipoides* (Labill.) R.Br. var. *stipoides*

FAMILY

Poaceae

AUTHORITY

Microlaena stipoides (Labill.) R.Br.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

No

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Grasses

NVS CODE

MICSTI

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 48

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2012 | Not Threatened

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

DISTRIBUTION

North Island: throughout; South Island: throughout, less frequent in Canterbury, Otago and Westland, absent in Fiordland; Stewart Island; Kemadec Islands: Raoul Id; Chatham Islands.

Also indigenous to Australia and Malesia.

There is every reason to believe that Australian races are here as migrants, but it may be impossible to differentiate between them and indigenous plants, however some races appear larger.

HABITAT

Open lowland forest and manuka-kanuka scrub, ruderal and in rough pasture; sea level to 1300 m.



Kerikeri River. Photographer: Jeremy Rolfe



Kerikeri River. Photographer: Jeremy Rolfe

FEATURES

Rhizomatous perennial with extravaginal branching, and much branched, multinoded stems of many cauline, often stiff hairy leaves, and often purpled spikelets on erectly branched narrow panicles. Branching extravaginal; rhizomes sometimes short; cataphylls chaffy. Leaf-sheath tight, short hairy or glabrous, overlapping node above, keel obscure. Ligule to 0.5 mm, finely erose, ciliate. Auricles 2, small, margin hairs (c. 3 mm) few. Collar short stiff hairy. Leaf-blade 5-25 cm × 2-5 mm wide, abaxially and adaxially abundantly stiff hairy sometimes more so abaxially, midrib prominent; margins with close-set, sharp teeth, retrorse below antrorse above, sometimes thickened, white, undulating. Culm to 85 cm, internodes many, glabrous, sometimes longitudinally grooved. Panicle 10-25 cm, narrow, slender, internodes short, branches erect to 5 cm, > internodes, rachis longitudinally grooved; branches and pedicels finely scabrid. Spikelets 25-35 mm, on slender finely scabrid pedicels; Ø lemmas often purple or purple-suffused. Glumes ± equal, 1-nerved, entire, often purple, margins ciliate, distant from Ø lemmas, < callus hairs; lower to 0.8 mm, upper to 1.5 mm. Callus 1-1.5-2 mm, clothed in hairs to 2 mm. Lower Ø lemma 12-20-30 mm, 5-7-nerved, scabrid, margin short (0.25 mm) hairy, awn > ½ lemma length; upper Ø lemma 17-26-35 mm, prickly-toothed throughout or glabrous below and prickled above, 5-7-nerved, awn > ½ lemma length; callus hairs 0. lemma 5-7-9 mm, 5-7-nerved, shining, smooth except for teeth on upper ½ of keel, shortly awned (0.1-1.0 mm) from shortly lobed ciliate apex, margins hyaline; when cleistogamous often included by upper Ø lemma. Palea membranous, hyaline, produced into a mucro or becoming acute, apex ciliate; dimorphic, 4-6-8 mm in chasmogamous flowers, 2-3-4 mm in cleistogamous flowers. Lodicules 2, 1-2-2.7 mm in chasmogamous flowers occasionally hair-tipped, falling with caryopsis; 0 in cleistogamous flowers. Stamens 2-3-4; anthers 1.5-2.5-4.2 mm in chasmogamous flowers, (1)-2-3-4, 0.2-0.4-1.0 mm in cleistogamous flowers. Gynoecium: ovary 0.8-1.2 mm; stigma-styles 1.2-2.5-4.0 mm in chasmogamous flowers, 0.8-1.4-2.0 mm in cleistogamous flowers, stigma branches reaching ovary. Caryopsis laterally compressed, finely wrinkled, often falling free, 3.5-4.5-5.5 mm in chasmogamous flowers, 2-3.8-5.8 in cleistogamous flowers; embryo 0.6-1.0 mm. 2n= 48.

ETYMOLOGY

microlaena: Small cover (outer scales of spikelet)

stipoides: Like *Stipa*, another grass

WHERE TO BUY

Occasionally sold by specialist native plant nurseries. However, often present in peoples gardens as a lawn and hedge weed.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared by Marley Ford (28 December 2021). Brief description, Distribution, Habitat, Features and Similar taxa sections copied from Edgar & Connor (2010).

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Edgar, E., & Connor, H. E. (2010). Flora of New Zealand-Vol. V: Gramineae. *Flora of New Zealand-Vol. V: Gramineae.*, (Ed. 2).

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/microlaena-stipoides/>