

Nassella neesiana

COMMON NAMES

Chilean needle grass

BIOSTATUS

Exotic

CONSERVATION STATUS

Not applicable

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Grasses

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Erect, tussocky, tufted perennial grass to 1 m tall (prostrate with dense horizontal tillers where heavily grazed).

Stem base swollen. **Leaves** yellowish-green, 400 × 1–5 mm (rolled when in drought), margins rough and bristly. **Leaf collar** has tufts of erect hairs on both sides. **Ligule** short, membranous. **Seedheads** of 2 types: large, drooping, open, harsh, purplish, turning silver; and small, hidden in leaf sheaths (appear as swellings in stem above node).

Seed 8–10 mm long, narrow, bristly, sharply pointed, with 60–80 mm twisted hair-like awn, November–December.

SIMILAR TAXA

Lolium arundinaceum subsp. *arundinaceum* is similar in growth but *N. neesiana* has narrower leaves and the spear-like attachment on the seed is distinctive.

HABITAT

Terrestrial.

GENUS

Nassella

FAMILY

Poaceae

AUTHORITY

Nassella neesiana (Trin. et Rupr.) Barkworth

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

November, December

YEAR NATURALISED

1940

ORIGIN

S. America

REASON FOR INTRODUCTION

Ornamental.

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

Perennial. seeds are >90% viable and survive for several years in the soil and germinate in autumn and spring.

Restricted distribution due to a lack of wind dispersal; localised spread occurs through seed being transported by stock, in hay, on clothing, by machinery and in water.



NATIONAL PEST PLANT ACCORD SPECIES

This plant is listed in the 2020 National Pest Plant Accord. The National Pest Plant Accord (NPPA) is an agreement to prevent the sale and/or distribution of specified pest plants where either formal or casual horticultural trade is the most significant way of spreading the plant in New Zealand. For up to date information and an electronic copy of the 2020 Pest Plant Accord manual (including plant information and images) visit the [MPI website](#).

ENVIRONMENTAL WEED (2024)

This plant is named in a list of 386 environmental weeds in New Zealand 2024 prepared by DOC. 759 candidate species were considered for inclusion on this new comprehensive list of environmental weeds in New Zealand. The species considered were drawn from published lists of weed species, lists of plants that must be reported or managed by law if observed, existing national and regional programmes and agreements for pest management, and species already managed by the Department of Conservation (DOC). Candidate species were then assessed to see if they were fully naturalised and whether they have more than minor impacts in natural ecosystems. Read the full report [here](#).

NVS CODE

NASNEE

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/nassella-neesiana/>

PDF DATE

25 May 2026