

Poa acicularifolia subsp. acicularifolia

COMMON NAMES

limestone cushion poa

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: RR

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Grasses

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Small, blue-green perennial grass forming diminutive, compact, tight, interlacing mats, 100–150 mm at flowering. **Culms** far overtopping leaves, arising from a woody, much-branched rhizome, with wiry, very long-creeping roots at nodes and numerous fine rootlets; branching intravaginal; leaf-blades disarticulating at ligule. **Leaf-sheath** light cream to later greyish brown, much wider than leaf-blade, glabrous, membranous, sparsely ribbed; margins very wide hyaline. **Ligule** 1–5 mm, apically glabrous, tapered, entire, abaxially scabrid near base or smooth, occasionally extending as a rim-like membranous contra-ligule. **Leaf-blade** stiff, rigidly cartilaginous, falcate, 5.0–25.0 × c.0.5 mm diameter, involute, glabrous; margins sparsely prickly-toothed, slightly narrowed to firm abruptly shortly curved, sometimes pungent tip. **Culm** 30–100 mm, with 1–2 small cauline leaves, internodes glabrous. **Panicle** 15–35 mm, lax; rachis glabrous, branches capillary, smooth or very finely scabrid, with 1–2 spikelets at branchlet tips. **Spikelets** 4–8 mm, 2–5-flowered, light grey-green. **Glumes** subequal, 2.0–3.5 mm, 3-nerved, elliptic-ovate, midnerve scabrid near subobtuse tip, margins often finely scabrid. **Lemma** 3–4 mm, 5-nerved, oblong-elliptic, obtuse, short-pubescent throughout lower $\frac{1}{3}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ but central internerves sometimes glabrous, scabrid above on midnerve and occasionally towards tip; margins scabrid above. **Palea** 2.5–3.5 mm, keels ciliate-scabrid, interkeel minutely hairy on lower $\frac{1}{2}$. **Callus** ringed by short soft hairs. **Rachilla** 0.5–1 mm, usually ciliate; prolongation twice as long. **Lodicules** 0.5 mm. **Anthers** 1.8–3 mm. **Seeds** c. 1.5–2.0 × 0.5 mm.

SIMILAR TAXA

Most likely to be confused with *Poa colensoi* Hook.f., which is a highly variable species. The most common form of *P. colensoi* present in the north-eastern South Island differs from *P. acicularifolia* subsp. *acicularifolia* by the longer, erect, firm rather than rigidly cartilaginous falcate leaves, scabrid rather than smooth upper leaf-blades, and short-hairy rather than almost glabrous or shortly scabrid lemmas. *Poa acicularifolia* subsp. *ophitalis* Edgar is confined to ultramafic substrates in eastern Nelson and differs by its more open, rather loosely interconnected rather than tightly compact mat-forming growth habit, and longer, less rigid, erect rather than falcate leaves.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: Marlborough, North and Central Canterbury.

HABITAT

Montane to subalpine grassland overlying calcareous rocks and soils. Also on limestone bluffs and screes.



Castlehill, December 1994. Photographer: Gillian M. Crowcroft, Licence: All rights reserved.



Castle Hill. Photographer: Melissa Hutchison, Date taken: 22/02/2020, Licence: CC BY-NC.

THREATS

Potentially threatened by the spread of hawkweeds (*Hieraceum* spp.) and grasses (such as chewings fescue (*Festuca rubra* subsp. *commutata*) and cocksfoot (*Dactylis glomeratus* L.)) in the limestone habitats it favours. At present there is no documented evidence of decline but careful monitoring is needed at key sites to be sure this grass remains secure. Current observations (which lack hard data) suggest it still exists as stable populations within its main known habitats.

GENUS

Poa

FAMILY

Poaceae

AUTHORITY

Poa acicularifolia Buchanan subsp. *acicularifolia*

SYNONYMS

Poa acicularifolia Buchanan

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

October–December

FRUITING

November–April

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown in a small pot in an alpine house. Resents humidity and does best in free draining, base-rich soils.

ETYMOLOGY

poa: Meadow grass

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

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

NVS CODE

POAASA

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 28

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DP, RR

2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: RR

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon

2004 | Range Restricted

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

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

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (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.

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/poa-acicularifolia-subsp-acicularifolia/>

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