

Poa acicularifolia subsp. *ophitalis*



COMMON NAME

ultramafic cushion poa

SYNONYMS

None (first described in 1986)

FAMILY

Poaceae

AUTHORITY

Poa acicularifolia subsp. *ophitalis* Edgar

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Grasses

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

$2n = 28$

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

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



Red Hills, Richmond Ranges. Photographer: Melissa Hutchison, Date taken: 08/01/2023, Licence: CC BY-NC.

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: RR, Sp

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon

2004 | Range Restricted



Red Hills, Richmond Ranges. Photographer: Melissa Hutchison, Date taken: 08/01/2023, Licence: CC BY-NC.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: South Island (eastern Nelson and western Marlborough).

HABITAT

Subalpine. An ultramafic endemic confined to ultramafic soil and scree.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Small, tufted blue-green perennial with tufts usually aggregated or with rhizomes interconnecting to form loose mats. Plants 100–200 mm at flowering with 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** 5–25 × c. 0.5 mm, involute, erect, firm, rigid, glabrous; margins sparsely prickle-toothed, slightly narrowed to firm abruptly shortly curved, sometimes pungent tip. **Culm** 30–150 mm, with 1–2 small caudine 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 × 0.5 mm.

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

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

SIMILAR TAXA

Most likely to be confused with *Poa colensoi* Hook.f., which is a highly variable species. The *P. colensoi* form present on ultramafic substrates differs from *P. acicularifolia* subsp. *ophitalis* by the scabrid rather than smooth upper leaf-blades, and short-hairy rather than almost glabrous or shortly scabrid lemmas. *Poa acicularifolia* Buchanan subsp. *acicularifolia* is confined to calcareous substrates and differs by its tightly compact, mat-forming growth, and shorter, rigid, cartilaginous, falcate leaves.

FLOWERING

October–December

FRUITING

December–March

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

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

THREATS

An ultramafic endemic, which is naturally restricted to small areas of suitable habitat within the subalpine zone of this rock type. There are currently no known threats to this grass.

ETYMOLOGY

poa: Meadow grass

WHERE TO BUY

Not Commercially Available

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (June 2005). Description modified from Edgar and Connor (2000).

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

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

MORE INFORMATION

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