

Poa billardierei

COMMON NAMES

sand tussock, hinarepe

BIOSTATUS

Native

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: CI, DPS, DPT, PD, RR, SO

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Grasses

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Yellow-green tussocks up to about 70 cm tall. **Leaves** fine, rolled, somewhat drooping (coarser than silver tussock), initially green, often fading at tips to silver, and drying to golden-straw colour. **Seed-heads** no longer than leaves; seeds relatively large, barley-like, leaving a characteristic zig-zag look to the remaining head when fallen.

SIMILAR TAXA

Poa billardierei could be confused with *Poa chathamica* which has blue-green or grass-green flat leaves and an open seed head which overtops the foliage. It could also be confused with *Ammophila arenaria* (marram grass) which has similar foliage but large cat's tail-like seed heads that overtop the foliage. *Ammophila arenaria* is often confused with *P. billardierei* because they grow in the same habitat.

DISTRIBUTION

North Island, South Island, Chatham Island (apparently absent from Chatham Island now despite being formerly abundant). Also found in temperate Australia.

HABITAT

Coastal dunes; sandy and rocky places near the shore, especially foredunes and dune hollows.

THREATS

Mammalian grazing and browsing (palatable to sheep, cattle, goats and horses). Competition from marram grass. Coastal development and use of vehicles. The combined impact of browsing and competition from marram grass is believed to have caused the loss of the species from the Chatham Islands.

GENUS

Poa

FAMILY

Poaceae

AUTHORITY

Poa billardierei (Spreng.)St.-Yves



Austrofestuca littoralis. Photographer: Geoff Walls, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Photo of inflorescence. Photographer: Barbara Mitcalfe, Licence: CC BY-NC.

SYNONYMS

Festuca littoralis Labill.; *Schedonorus littoralis* (Labill.) P.Beauv.; *Triodia billardierei* Spreng.; *Poa billardierei* (Spreng.)St.-Yves; *Schedonorus billardioreanus* Nees; *Arundo triodioides* Trin.; *Schedonorus littoralis* var. *alpha* minor Hook.f.; *Austrofestuca littoralis* (Labill.) E.B.Alexev.

TAXONOMIC NOTES

Until 2009 *Poa billardierei* was treated in Australasia as part of the segregate genus *Austrofestuca* Tzvelev. Soreng et al. (2009) reinstated the name *Poa billardierei* for this species after demonstrating that it and the allied Australian endemic *Austrofestuca pubinervis* (Vickery) B.K.Simon (now *Poa pubinervis* Vickery) were nested within *Poa* where they form their own section (Sect. *Austrofestuca* (Tzvelev) Soreng, L.J.Gillespie & S.W.L.Jacobs). The other two Australian endemic species of *Austrofestuca* (*A. eriopoda* (Vickery) S.W.L.Jacobs and *A. hookeriana* (F.Muell. ex Hook.f.) S.W.L.Jacobs) are now placed in the reinstated *Hookerochloa*.

ENDEMIC TAXON

No

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

Early summer

FRUITING

Mid to late summer

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

Florets are wind dispersed (Thorsen et al., 2009).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Collect seed in mid to late summer-autumn (early January in Wellington). Use fresh seed, sow in free-draining seed-raising mix (50:50 peat:sand), cover lightly with sieved river sand. It should germinate within 2 months. Grow on in open position where they will not be waterlogged. When growing by division collect material in autumn (after flowering has finished) or spring (before new growth appears). Use vigorous pieces from outside of plant and do not make divisions too small. Water regularly until established and new growth appears. Plant out in well-drained soil in open situation.

PLANT OF THE MONTH

This plant has been featured as a Plant of the Month – see [Trilepidea: NZPCN newsletter for May 2009](#) for the full story.

ETYMOLOGY

poa: Meadow grass

billardierei: Named after Jacques Houttou de Labillardiere (1755-1834), 19th century French botanist who described several New Zealand plants

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

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

NVS CODE

POABIL

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 28

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: PD, RR, SO

2012 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: SO

2009 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: SO

2004 | Gradual Decline

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Auckland: 2025 | Regionally Threatened – Regionally Endangered | Qualifiers: CD, DPR, DPS, DPT, PF, RR, SO 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.

Otago: 2025 | Regionally Extirpated Help

The regional threat classification system leverages off the national assessments in the NZTCS, providing information relevant for the regional context. Otago conservation status information is sourced from the “Conservation Status of Indigenous Vascular Plants in Otago, 2025” Jarvie S et al. (2025) report.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Cameron EK. 1991. *Austrofestuca* an extinct addition to the Waitakere Flora. *Auckland Botanical Society Journal* 46: 20.

Mitcalfe B, Horne C. 2002. Rediscovery of a nationally rare tussock in Makara Foreshore Reserve, Owhariu Bay, Wellington. *Wellington Botanical Society Bulletin* 48: 23–24.

Soreng RJ, Gillespie LJ, Jacobs SWL. 2009. *Saxipoa* and *Sylvipoa* – two new genera and a new classification for Australian *Poa* (Poaceae: Poinae). *Australian Systematic Botany* 22: 401-412.

Stanley, R. 2001. Sand tussock *Austrofestuca littoralis* update on the Auckland populations. *Auckland Botanical Society Journal* 56: 21–22.

Thorsen MJ, Dickinson KJM, Seddon PJ. 2009. Seed dispersal systems in the New Zealand flora. *Perspectives in Plant Ecology, Evolution and Systematics* 11: 285–309.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 2 September 2003.

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

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

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