

Poa billardierei

COMMON NAME

sand tussock, hinarepe

SYNONYMS

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

FAMILY

Poaceae

AUTHORITY

Poa billardierei (Spreng.)St.-Yves

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

No

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Grasses

NVS CODE

POABIL

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 28

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2012 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: SO

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2009 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: SO

2004 | Gradual Decline

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.



Austrofestuca littoralis. Photographer: Geoff Walls



Photo of inflorescence. Photographer: Barbara Mitcalfe

FEATURES

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. Flowers in early summer and the seed are produced in late summer. It 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 marram grass which has similar foliage but large cat's-tail-like seed heads which overtop the foliage.

SIMILAR TAXA

Ammophila arenaria (marram grass) is often confused with sand tussock because they grow in the same habitat.

FLOWERING

Early summer

FRUITING

Mid to late summer

LIFE CYCLE

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.

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.

ETYMOLOGY

poa: Meadow grass

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

NOTES ON TAXONOMY

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 *Hookerchloa*.

ATTRIBUTION

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

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

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- 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, R.J.; Gillespie, L.J.; Jacobs, S.W.L. 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, M. J.; Dickinson, K. J. M.; Seddon, P. J. 2009. Seed dispersal systems in the New Zealand flora. *Perspectives in Plant Ecology, Evolution and Systematics* 2009 Vol. 11 No. 4 pp. 285-309

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

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