

Poa chathamica

COMMON NAMES

Chatham Islands poa

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: IE, RR

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Grasses

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Light green, dark green to blue-green, widely creeping drooping perennial grass usually forming dense, leafy swards from long, narrow rhizomes, or stiffly erect tufts to 1 m. **Leaves** about equal to culms; branching extravaginal near plant base, intravaginal above; leaf-blades long persistent. **Leaf-sheath** light green to light brown or straw-coloured, coriaceous, distinctly ribbed, smooth to finely scabrid, keeled. **Ligule** 0.2–1.0 mm, truncate, stiff, rim ciliate, undersides with matted stiff minute hairs. **Leaf-blade** 50–600 × 2.5–4.5 mm, folded to flat, or inrolled and c. 1 mm diameter, coriaceous, underside smooth, upper surface ribbed, covered with short prickle-teeth and sometimes short stiff hairs; margins ± thickened, smooth to sparsely scabrid, midrib scabrid near straight-sided, pungent tip. **Culm** 100–900 mm, internodes smooth, densely scabrid below panicle. **Panicle** 55–120 mm, lax or contracted; branches spreading or erect, sparsely to densely scabrid. **Spikelets** 6.5–14.5 mm, 2–5-flowered, greyish green to light greenish brown. **Glumes** subequal, 3-nerved, elliptic-lanceolate, acute to acuminate, often with minute fine hairs near tip, occasionally scabrid throughout, midnerve ciliate-scabrid especially on upper ½; lower 4.5–7.5 mm, upper 4.5–8.0 mm; margins ciliate. **Lemma** 4.5–9.0 mm, 5-nerved, elliptic- to oblong-lanceolate, subobtuse to subacute, scabrid above or occasionally throughout, midnerve with long fine hairs to ½ length, lateral nerves hairy near base; margins minutely ciliate. **Palea** 3.5–7.5 mm, keels rather stiffly ciliate-scabrid, interkeel with sparse minute hairs. **Callus** with loose web of long fine crinkled hairs. **Rachilla** 0.5–1.0 mm, glabrous to sparsely minutely pubescent; prolongation twice as long. **Lodicules** 0.5–2.0 mm, occasionally hair-tipped. **Anthers** 2.0–3.5 mm. **Seed** 2.0 × 0.5 mm

SIMILAR TAXA

Poa chathamica appears to be related to *P. anceps*, *P. xenica* Edgar et Connor, and an as yet unnamed hexaploid complex of plants currently included within *Poa cita* Edgar. From *Poa anceps*, *P. chathamica* differs by the upper surface of the leaf blades which are ribbed, and covered in fine prickle-teeth, by the spikelets which are 6.5–14.5 mm long, by the hexaploid ($2n = 112$) rather than diploid ($2n = 28$) chromosome number, and its geographic isolation on the Chatham Islands. From *P. xenica* it differs by hermaphrodite rather than dioecious habit, smaller panicles (120 cf. 250 mm in *P. xenica*), callus which bears loose crinkly hairs rather than being glabrous, and restriction to the Chatham Islands. Distinction from the swarding, widely creeping hexaploid forms of *P. cita* is less clear and requires further investigation. Currently the hexaploid forms of *P. cita* appear confined to the southern Cook Strait, North-West Nelson and northern Westland coastline.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: Chatham Islands (all main islands).



Poa chathamica. Photographer: Peter J de Lange, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Poa chathamica. Photographer: Peter J de Lange, Licence: CC BY-NC.

HABITAT

Coastal and inland. Widespread on sand dunes, within restiad peat bogs, rough pasture, along stream banks, river gorges, on rock outcrops and cliff faces and in boulder falls.

THREATS

It is threatened by habitat modification, stock grazing and competition from introduced plants such as marram grass.

GENUS

Poa

FAMILY

Poaceae

AUTHORITY

Poa chathamica Petrie

SYNONYMS

Poa anceps var. *chathamica* (Petrie) Zotov

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

September–January

FRUITING

January–February

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from fresh seed and rooted pieces. Does best in full sun. However, in cultivation it rarely flowers.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FAC: Facultative

Commonly occurs as either a hydrophyte or non-hydrophyte (non-wetlands).

WHERE TO BUY

Not Commercially Available

ETYMOLOGY

poa: Meadow grass

chathamica: From the Chatham Islands

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

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

NVS CODE

POACHA

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

$2n = 112$

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

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

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

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: IE

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-chathamica/>

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