Poa ramosissima

BIOSTATUS
Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: RR
Jump to previous conservation statuses

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Grasses

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Perennial forming soft, turfy bright green, patches, arising from long, bare prostrate culms with erect apices erect. Plants leafy and much-branched; branching intravaginal; leaf-blades persistent. **Leaf-sheath** greenish brown to purplish, glabrous, hyaline, ribs prominent. **Ligule** 1.5–4.0 mm, deeply and sharply lacerate, glabrous throughout. **Leaf-blade** 40–150 × 1–2 mm, thin, weak, flat, ribs many, strong, minutely papillose-scabrid, adaxially furrowed, evenly narrowed to very finely obtuse or subobtuse tip; margins glabrous. **Culm** 10–400 mm, internodes glabrous. **Panicle** 20–100 mm, ± oblong, contracted, usually overtopped by leaves; rachis glabrous, branches erect, short, scarcely spreading, finely papillose-scabrid, bearing few spikelets. **Spikelets** 4.5–7.5 mm, 3–5-flowered, greenish brown, very minutely papillose-scabrid. **Glumes** subequal or the lower obviously shorter, both narrow-lanceolate, acute or acuminate; lower 2.5–4 mm, 1–3-nerved, upper 3.0–4.5 mm, 3–nerved. **Lemma** 3.8–5.0 mm, 5–7-nerved, elliptic, drawn out to acute or acuminate tip, mid- and lateral nerves with a few short hairs near base. **Palea** 2.5–4.5 mm, very narrow, keels with a few short hair-like prickle-teeth. **Callus** with small tufts of long, twisted hairs below midnerve of lemma and occasionally below lateral nerves. **Rachilla** 0.5–1.0 mm, glabrous. **Lodicules** 0.3–1.0 mm, occasionally hair-tipped. **Gynomonoecious**: each spikelet with 1–2 lower flowers perfect, anthers 1.5–2.5 mm, gynoecium c. 1.5 mm; upper flowers female with minute colourless anthers 0.1–0.7 mm, gynoecium c. 1.5 mm. **Seeds** c. 1.0 × 0.5 mm.

SIMILAR TAXA
Poa ramosissima is closely related to *Poa cookii* (Hook.f.) Hook.f. which in the New Zealand Botanical Region is only known from Macquarie Island, but also occurs on Heard and Kerguelen Islands). Both species have deeply lacerate ligules, papillose upper leaf surfaces and panicle branches, and gynomonoecious flowers. From *P. cookii*, *P. ramosissima* is distinguished by its more slender than large, tufted growth habit, and by the leaf surfaces and the spikelet which are scabrid-papillose. In *P. cookii* the undersides of the leaves are glabrous and the spikelets are glabrous.

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic. New Zealand: Auckland Islands and Campbell Island/Motu Ihupuku.

HABITAT
Coastal cliffs, usually associated with bird colonies.

THREATS
Not threatened. Listed because this species naturally occupies a small geographic area within which it is very common.

GENUS
Poa

FAMILY
Poaceae

AUTHORITY
Poa ramosissima Hook.f.

SYNONYMS
Poa ramosissima var. beta Hook.f.

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
November–December

FRUITING
December–March

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Difficult. Can be grown from fresh seed and rooted pieces. Will not flourish in warmor dry climates and dislikes humid conditions. Best in a cool spot within permanntly damp—but not saturated, fertile soil.

WHERE TO BUY
Not commercially available

ETYMOLOGY
poa: Meadow grass

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY
Key to the grasses of New Zealand

NVS CODE
POARAM

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 28

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: 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
Description modified from Edgar and Connor (2000).

MORE INFORMATION
https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/poa-ramosissima/

PDF DATE
25 May 2026