

# Puccinellia raroflorens

## COMMON NAMES

saltgrass

## BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: CD, DPT, RR

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

## CATEGORY

Vascular

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Grasses

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Diminutive perennial grass forming diffuse mats up to 2 m diam. and 450 mm high. Plants usually partially covered in soil, rarely flowering with only the short, narrow, dull green leaves visible. **Branching** extravaginal.

**Leaf-sheath** hairless, wider than leaf-blade, ribs few, distinct. **Ligule** 0.2–0.6 mm, obtuse or truncate, transparent. **Leaf-blade** 10–30 × 0.2–0.5 mm, hair-like, inrolled, sometimes curled, hairless, tips subacute, margins minutely scabrid. **Culm** entirely hidden by leaf-sheaths. **Panicle** rarely present, 10–16 mm, overtopped by leaves, bearing 12 spikelets. **Spikelets** 3–4–(4.8) mm, 4–6-flowered, green to brownish green. **Glumes** unequal, ovate, obtuse; lower 0.6–1 mm, 1-nerved, upper 1.1–1.4 mm, 3-nerved. **Lemma** 1.8–2.5 mm, 5-nerved, ovate-elliptic, hairless. **Anthers** 0.4–0.6 mm. **Seeds** 1.2–1.6 × 0.6–0.7 mm.

## SIMILAR TAXA

This species can be distinguished from all other New Zealand *Puccinellia* Parl. in that it has extravaginal innovation shoots. Flowering plants are rarely seen. When present they differ from other *Puccinellia* in that the flowering panicles rarely overtop the surrounding leaves.

## DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. South Island (Central Otago) and Stewart Island. Known from the salt pans of Central Otago and in coastal sites on Stewart Island (Paterson Inlet and Mason Bay).

## HABITAT

A species of inland salt pans, salt slicks, and coastal salt encrusted sand depressions. It has also been collected from near barren, stony ground within an estuary.

## THREATS

This species is seriously threatened throughout its known mainland range because of the encroachment of salt-tolerant weeds within the saline soil habitats of Central Otago. Its status on Stewart Island remains unclear being known from just two collections made from widely separated localities and 20 years apart.

## GENUS

Puccinellia

## FAMILY

Poaceae

## AUTHORITY

Puccinellia raroflorens Edgar



Puccinellia raroflorens. Photographer: John Barkla, Licence: CC BY.



Puccinellia raroflorens. Photographer: John Barkla, Licence: CC BY.

## SYNONYMS

None

## ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## FLOWERING

November–January

## FRUITING

November–February

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Can be grown by the division of whole plants. Fresh seed should germinate easily.

## CULTIVATION

Not commercially available. A few plants are held by specialist growers.

## ETYMOLOGY

**puccinellia**: After the Italian botanist Benedetto Puccinelli (1808 - 1850).

**raro-florens**: From the Latin raro 'sporadic' and florens 'flowering'

## MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

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

## CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 56

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: CD, DP, RR

2012 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: CD, DP

2009 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: CD, DP

2004 | Threatened – Nationally Critical

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

## REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Otago: 2025 | Regionally Threatened – Regionally Critical | Qualifiers: CD, NR, NStr, PF, RR, TL [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

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).

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## MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/puccinellia-raro-florens/>

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