

Puccinellia stricta

COMMON NAMES

saltgrass

BIOSTATUS

Native

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)


CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Grasses

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Light bluish green or rarely pale yellow-green perennial tufts, 25–650 mm, with stiff culms and leaves, or with finer and less rigid leaves; branching intravaginal. **Leaf-sheath** smooth, submembranous to subcoriaceous, ± distinctly nerved, light brownish to purplish. **Ligule** 0.7–2.0 mm, smooth, rounded to truncate, or ± tapered at centre and acute. **Leaf-blade** 10–120 mm, involute, c. 0.5 mm diameter in rolled state, rigid and erect, or finer and softer, abaxially smooth, adaxially sparsely scabrous on nerves, or sometimes densely scabrous throughout, margins scabrous, narrowed to a fine acute tip. **Culm** 20–400 mm, enclosed by uppermost leaf-sheaths at flowering, later visible, smooth, erect. **Panicle** 20–200 × 2–55 mm, at first narrow-linear, racemose above, with few, erect, usually scabrous branches below, later more open with ± spreading branches bare at base. **Spikelets** 3.5–10.5 mm, 2–10-flowered, narrow, almost terete, light green to purplish. **Glumes** often quite unequal, elliptic-oblong, margins and sometimes midnerve minutely ciliate near tip; lower glume 0.6–2.3 mm, 1-nerved, subacute to subobtuse; upper glume 1.3–3.5 mm, 3-nerved, subobtuse to obtuse. **Lemma** 2–4 mm, 5-nerved, broad-elliptic, with very minute hairs at base not usually visible at ×10, and occasionally a few minute hairs on nerves near base, midnerve usually not quite reaching finely ciliate, obtuse tip. **Palea** slightly < lemma, bifid, keels scabrous in upper  **Rachilla** 0.5–1.0 mm. **Anthers** 0.4–1.0 mm. **Seed** 1.0–1.8 × 0.4–0.7 mm.

SIMILAR TAXA

Distinguished from other *Puccinellia* by the intravaginal new shoots; involute leaves; panicle overtopping leaves; upper glume usually 2.0–3.5 mm; lemma with minute hairs near base visible only at high magnification (c. ×40); palea keels finely scabrous. Differentiating between *Puccinellia stricta* and *Puccinellia walkeri* (which sometime co-occur) can be difficult: the size of the lemma (3–5mm in *P. walkeri*, usually ≤ 3 mm in *P. stricta*) is a good guide. The panicle of *P. stricta* also tends to open out post-flowering so that obvious branches are visible rather than remaining closely and erectly branched. The palea keel in *P. stricta* is scabrid but is ciliate in *P. walkeri* (though, this difference can be small).

DISTRIBUTION

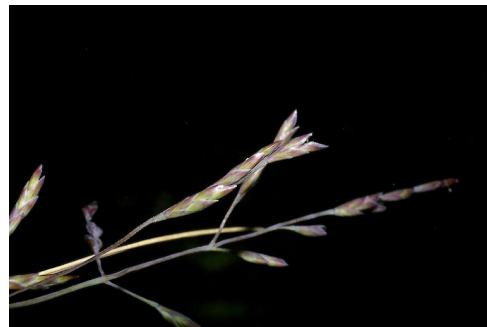
Indigenous. New Zealand: North (southwards from Auckland City, but not recorded from Bay of Plenty, Gisborne, or Taranaki), South (coastal Nelson, and on eastern to south-eastern coasts throughout, inland in Otago near Sutton, and in Central Otago), and Stewart Islands. Also Australia.

HABITAT

Coastal to montane. Salt marsh, sandy or stony ground at high tide level; inland on saline soils



Taputeranga Island, Wellington. Dec 1998.
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Miranda. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

THREATS

Not Threatened but uncommon north of the Waikato.

GENUS

Puccinellia

FAMILY

Poaceae

AUTHORITY

Puccinellia stricta (Hook.f.) Blom.

SYNONYMS

Atropis stricta (Hook.f.) Hack.; Puccinellia stricta (Hook.f.) Blom f. stricta; Atropis stricta var. suborbicularis Hack.; Puccinellia stricta var. suborbicularis (Hack.) Allan et Jansen; Poa stricta f. luxurians Allan et Jansen; Poa stricta f. pumila Allan et Jansen

ENDEMIC TAXON

No

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

September–December

FRUITING

October–March

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from seed and by division of established plants.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FAC: Facultative

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

ETYMOLOGY

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

stricta: From the Latin strictus 'upright, stiff'

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

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

NVS CODE

PUCSTR

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 14

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Auckland: 2025 | Regionally Threatened – Regionally Endangered | Qualifiers: CD, DPR, DPS, DPT, NR 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 At Risk – Regionally Declining | Qualifiers: CI, DPR, DPS, DPT, 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. 1996. *Puccinellia* Part. (Gramineae: Poeae) in New Zealand. *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 34: 17–32.

ATTRIBUTION

Description from Edgar and Connor (2000).

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MORE INFORMATION

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

PDF DATE

08 June 2026