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.

Taputeranga Island, Wellington. Dec 1998. Photographer: Barbara Mitcalfe, Licence: CC BY-NC.

Miranda. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

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 l≤ 3mm 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

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).

MORE INFORMATION

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

PDF DATE

08 June 2026