Stenostachys gracilis

BIOSTATUS
Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT
Jump to previous conservation statuses

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Grasses

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Perennial, stoloniferous, green, glaucous or yellow-green grass forming open to densely tufted, wide somewhat flat-leaved patches with long nodding inflorescences; often very stout in forested areas. **Leaf-sheath** 50–150 mm, with long (0.5–1.0 mm) hairs irregularly retrorse or erect, occasionally glabrate or glabrous. **Auricles** to 0.5 mm or minute, scarcely clasping. **Ligule** 0.3–1.0 mm, erose. **Leaf-blade** 100–200 × 1.5–2.0 mm, flat, thin, usually with hairs 0.5–1.0 mm or bearing sparse prickle-teeth above and glabrous below; margins glabrous. **Culm** 0.7–1.2 m long, slender, nodes evident sometimes ± geniculate, internodes glabrous. **Inflorescence** slender, narrow 100–300 mm, glaucous or somewhat powdery greyish white, comprised of 15–40 spikelets > internodes; internodes 2–5 mm but longer at base; rachis prolongation 2–6 mm. **Spikelets** to 10 mm, of 1–3 forests, on 1.0–1.5 mm stipes in the absence of glumes; rachilla prolongation 1.5–3.0 mm, conspicuously short stiffly hairy. **Glumes** 0, sometimes 1–2 and awn-like, 0–3 mm, very rarely 5–6 mm above, 1-nerved, prickle-toothed, much less than spikelets in length. **Lemma** 7–10 mm, prickle-teeth abundant, weakly keeled, infrequently bifid at apex, canaliculated above, tapering to awn 1.5–6.0 mm. **Palea** 5–7 mm, < lemma, apex usually prolonged or retuse; keels toothed and usually inrolled. **Callus** short, 0.5 mm, surrounded by abundant short stiff hairs; disarticulation ± oblique. **Rachilla** 1.5–2.5 mm, shortly prickle-toothed. **Lodicules** 0.75–1.00 mm. **Anthers** 1.5–2.0 mm, often retained as a remnant surmounting the seed apex. **Ovary** 1.25–1.40 mm; stigma-styles 1.5–2.0 mm. **Seed** 4.00–4.25 mm. **Flowers** mostly cleistogamous.

Spikelet, Doughboy Bay Stewart Island. Photographer: Marley Ford, Date taken: 26/01/2021, Licence: CC BY-NC.

Flowring spikelet, Doughboy Bay Stewart Island. Photographer: Marley Ford, Date taken: 26/01/2021, Licence: CC BY-NC.

SIMILAR TAXA
Distinguished from *S. deceptorix* Connor and *S. laevis* (Petrie) Connor by the mixtures of minute, absent or awn-like glumes in the inflorescence (rather than solely awn-like), and by the lemma which is conspicuously prickle-toothed rather than mostly smooth or sparingly prickel-toothed.

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic. North, South and Stewart Islands. Uncommon north of the Central Volcanic Plateau.

HABITAT
Coastal to montane (0-1000 m a.s.l.). In estuarine habitats, at gully and valley heads, on clay banks and along stream sides in tall forest. Also in shrublands. occasionally found in tussock grassland.

THREATS
Not Threatened. However, scarce north of the Bay of Plenty and Waikato.

GENUS
Stenostachys

FAMILY
Poaceae

AUTHORITY
Stenostachys gracilis (Hook.f.) Connor

SYNONYMS
Gymnostichum gracile Hook.f.; Hystrix gracilis (Hook.f.) Kuntze; Asprella gracilis (Hook.f.) Kirk; Cockaynae gracilis (Hook.f.) Zotov; Stenostachys narduroides Turcz.; Elymus narduroides (Turcz.) Á.Löve et Connor; Agropyron subeglume P.Candargy

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
Yes

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
September–January

FRUITING
November–May

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Easily grown from fresh seed and rooted pieces. Prefers a semi-shaded site, planted in damp soil. Very attractive when in flower and fruit.

ETYMOLOGY
gracilis: Slender

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

NVS CODE
STEGRC

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 28

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2017 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: DP
2012 | Not Threatened
2009 | Data Deficient
2004 | Not Threatened
Jump to current conservation status

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES
Auckland: 2025 | Regionally Data Deficient | Qualifiers: DPR, DPS, DPT 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 Data Deficient 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/stenostachys-gracilis/

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08 June 2026