

**Distinguishing features:**

Spikelets at right angles to stem when ripe.

Leaves with hairs on veins. Stem hairy within and just below seedhead, otherwise smooth. Marlborough subspecies has teeth on stem.

Similar plants:

Marlborough limestone wheat grass (*Australopyrum calcis* subspecies *calcis*), *Elymus* species, sweet vernal (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*), other grasses.

Distribution:

North Canterbury: Mt Cass Limestone Range and Castle Hill Basin. South Canterbury: Pleasant Point, Waihao.

Threat Status:

Nationally vulnerable

Habitat:

Limestone; high fertility soil at shaded bases of limestone tors, forest margins.

Threats:

Competition with exotic grasses and other weeds, stock trampling, browse.

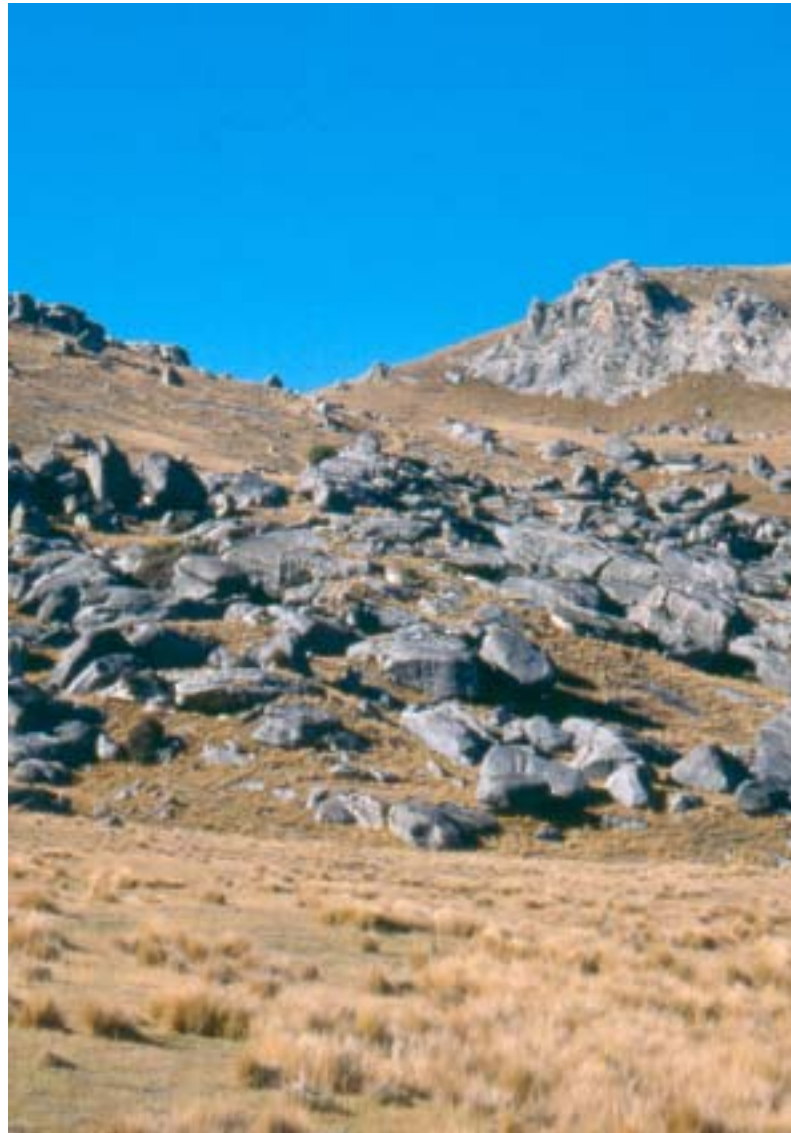


Photo: Brian Molloy

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Canterbury limestone wheat grass

Australopyrum calcis *ssp optatum*

Canterbury limestone wheat grass is one of five threatened grassy plants included in a national recovery plan. They all grow in dry fertile sites in the eastern South Island. These places may be used for farming, quarrying or recreation and are also often of significance to Māori. Hopefully with collaboration between all those involved it will be possible to find compatible ways of managing these places. A first step towards this is helping people recognise the plants.

About Canterbury limestone wheat grass

Description:

A tufted perennial grass with simple unbranched head. Leaf 6-25cm long, 0.5-3.5mm wide, flat, green to blue-green, with hairs on upper surface; lower surface with conspicuous white midrib and two white side ribs. Flowering stem to 60cm high with dark swollen nodes; hairy within and just below seedhead. Developing spikelets more or less parallel to stem but at right angles during flowering. Awns (hair tips) short. As they ripen spikelets turn stiff and straw-coloured.

Photos: Brian Molloy



Photo: Allan Herbarium.
Landcare Research



Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai