

Anemanthele lessoniana

COMMON NAMES

gossamer grass

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Grasses

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Erect, tufted, shortly rhizomatous perennial, bearing densely leafy culms surmounted by delicate, nodding panicles. **Leaf-sheath** to 150 mm, outer margin ciliate. **Ligule** 1.5 mm, asymmetrical, entire to fimbriate. **Leaf-blade** 450 × 6 mm, stiff, involute or flat, upper surface shining, apex acute, undersides smooth, dull, margins scabrid. **Culm** to 750 mm, simple, erect to nodding, internodes smooth, occasionally scabrid below panicle. **Panicle** 600 mm; purplish-red or green, branches capillary, spreading, whorled; rachis slender, smooth to scaberulous, branches and pedicels scaberulous. **Spikelets** laterally subcompressed, pale green to purplish. **Glumes** subequal, 2.5–3.5 mm, hyaline, acute to acuminate, keel scabrid; lower linear-lanceolate, 1-nerved, upper elliptic-lanceolate, 1–3-nerved. **Flowers** perfect. **Lemma** 2 mm, 3-nerved, elliptic-oblong, awn to 8 mm, scabrid, curved, caducous. **Callus** minute, rounded, ringed by very minute hairs. **Anther** 1, 0.8–1.4 mm, apically thickened.

SIMILAR TAXA

A most distinctive and singular species which could only be confused with the common introduced grass *Piptatherum miliaceum* (L.) Coss. From that species *Anemanthele* is most readily distinguished by its spikelets which have laterally subcompressed rather than dorsally compressed florets bearing one rather than three stamens.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: North Island (North Auckland, Waikato and southern third of the island), South Island (from Nelson and Marlborough south, mainly in the east). Also occurs as a cultivation escape in some places, e.g., Auckland City.

HABITAT

Sea level to montane forest, forest margins, scrub and on cliff faces and associated talus.

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: Sp, DPS, DPT

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DETAILED TAXONOMY

FAMILY

Poaceae

AUTHORITY

Anemanthele lessoniana (Steud.) Veldkamp



Plants heavy with seed growing on limestone, Southland Plains Ecological District. Photographer: Jesse Bythell, Date taken: 02/03/2023, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Growing on limestone, Southland Plains Ecological District. Photographer: Jesse Bythell, Date taken: 02/03/2023, Licence: CC BY-NC.

SYNONYMS

Agrostis lessoniana Steud., *Oryzopsis lessoniana* (Steud.) Veldkamp, *Agrostis procera* A.Rich., *Dichelachne procera* Steud., *D. rigida* Steud., *Oryzopsis rigida* (Steud.) Zotov, *Agrostis rigida* A.Rich., *Apera arundinacea* Hook.f., *Stipa arundinacea* (Hook.f.) Benth., *Apera purpurascens* Colenso

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

Yes

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

ECOLOGY

FLOWERING

(October)–January–(March)

FRUITING

(November)–February–(May)

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

Florets are dispersed by wind (Thorsen et al., 2009).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easy from fresh seed, often naturalises in gardens and can become very invasive. Can be grown in a variety of situations but does best in dry soil in full sun or partial shade under trees. Does not like damp soils.

OTHER INFORMATION

CULTIVATION

Very common in cultivation and sold by most plant retail nurseries, though often under a variety of incorrect names.

ETYMOLOGY

lessoniana: Named after René Primevère Lesson who was a 19th century French botanist and surgeon

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

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

NVS CODE

ANELES

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 40-44

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | At Risk – Relict | Qualifiers: DP, Sp

2012 | Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: DP, Sp

2009 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: DP

2004 | Sparse

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Otago: 2024 | Threatened – Regionally Critical | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT, Sp

REFERENCING AND CITATIONS

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Thorsen MJ, Dickinson KJM, Seddon PJ. 2009. Seed dispersal systems in the New Zealand flora. *Perspectives in Plant Ecology, Evolution and Systematics* 11: 285–309. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ppees.2009.06.001>.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared by P.J. de Lange for NZPCN (1 June 2013)

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/anemanthele-lessoniana/> (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/anemanthele-lessoniana/>

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