

Chionochloa vireta

COMMON NAME

snow tussock

SYNONYMS

None

FAMILY

Poaceae

AUTHORITY

Chionochloa vireta Connor

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Grasses

NVS CODE

CHIVIR

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 42

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DP, RR, Sp

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: Sp

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DP

2004 | Sparse

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. South Island from southern Canterbury to Fiordland.

HABITAT

A sparse component of upper montane to subalpine tussock grasslands (1200–1600 m. a.s.l.).

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Delicate, gracile tussock with hairy, stramineous sheaths. Leaf-sheath to 100 mm, very hairy, entire, margins often undulose, apical tuft of hairs up to 3.5 mm. **Ligule** 0.5 mm. **Leaf-blade** up to 300 × 2.5 mm, more or less flat, to U or V-shaped, strongly keeled, twisting above, disarticulating at ligule, abaxial surfaces prickled toothed, adaxial also with prickle-teeth; margin with long hairs below, these becoming prickle-toothed or rarely, otherwise glabrous and smooth. **Culm** to 600 mm, slender, internodes glabrous. **Inflorescence** to 130 mm, glabrous except for long hairs at branch axils. **Spikelets** golden and purple, comprising up to 8 florets. **Glumes** usually less than nearest lemma lobes; lower to 10 mm, 1–3–5-nerved, upper to 11 mm, 3–5–7-nerved. **Lemma** 5.5 mm or less; hairs dense on margins and astride central nerve, sparse or absent otherwise; lateral lobes to 4 mm, shortly awned or triangular-acute; central awn to 7 mm arising from a flat, rarely twisting, column to 2 mm. **Palea** 7 mm or less. **Callus** to 1 mm, hairs to 2.5 mm. **Rachilla** to 1 mm. **Anthers** 3.5 mm. **Ovary** 1 mm, stigma-styles 2 mm. **Seed** 2 mm.



MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

Key to the grasses of New Zealand

SIMILAR TAXA

Distinguished from *C. pallens* subsp. *cadens* Connor by its slender, gracile (rather than stout) habit, thin almost membranous, undulose (rather than firm and flat) sheath margins; and by the flat leaf-blade which is up to 2.5 mm rather than 10 mm wide.

FLOWERING

Unknown

FRUITING

Unknown

LIFE CYCLE

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

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Unknown

THREATS

Rather widespread but never particularly common. There is no evidence that the species is threatened but it is poorly known by field workers that the species might be better treated as Data Deficient until further surveys have clarified its status.

ETYMOLOGY

chionochloa: Snow grass

WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (June 2005). Description modified from Edgar and Connor (2000).

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Edgar E, Connor HE. 2000. Flora of New Zealand. Vol. V. Grasses. Christchurch, Manaaki Whenua Press. 650 p.
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.

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/chionochloa-vireta/>