

Austroderia richardii

COMMON NAMES

toetoe

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Grasses

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Tall, gracile, slender tussock-forming grass up to 3 m tall when flowering. **Leaf-sheath** glabrous, green, covered in white wax. **Ligule** 3.5 mm. Collar brown, basally glabrous, upper surface with short, stiff hairs surmounting ribs. **Leaf-blade** 2–3 × 0.25 m, green, dark-green, often somewhat glaucous, upper side with thick weft of hairs at base, otherwise sparsely hairy up midrib with abundant, minute prickly teeth throughout; undersurface with 5 mm long hairs near leaf margins, otherwise harshly scabrid. **Culm** up to 3 m, inflorescence portion up to 1 m tall, pennant-shaped, drooping, narrowly plumose. **Spikelets** numerous, 25 mm with 3 florets per spikelet. **Glumes** equal, > or equal to florets, 1- or 3-nerved. **Lemma** 10 mm, scabrid. **Palea** 6 mm, keels ciliate. **Callus hairs** 2 mm. **Rachilla** 1 mm, glabrous. **Flowers** either perfect (anthers 4.5 mm) or female (3 mm). **Ovary** of perfect flowers 1 mm, stigma-styles 2.5 mm; ovary of female flowers 1.3 mm, stigma-style 4 mm. **Seed** 3–4 mm.

SIMILAR TAXA

Closest to Austroderia toetoe from which it is best distinguished by the green rather than ivory leaf-sheaths, and by the green rather than ivory culm internodes. Also recognisable by the very slender, gracile leaves, culms and inflorescences. The inflorescences in this species are rather beautiful and resemble fine, narrow, pennants. Around the Foveaux Strait area and at Mason Bay, Stewart Island, some populations of *A. richardii* are distinctly rhizomatous.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. Confined to the South Island. Possibly in the North Island, east of Cape Palliser. Naturalised in Tasmania.

HABITAT

Abundant, from the coast to subalpine areas. Common along stream banks, river beds, around lake margins, and in other wet places. Also found in sand dunes, especially along the Foveaux Strait.

THREATS

Abundant and not threatened. Often naturalising in suitable habitats.

GENUS

Austroderia

FAMILY

Poaceae



Kakanui Mountains, Otago. Photographer: John Barkla, Licence: CC BY.



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

AUTHORITY

Austroderia richardii (Endl.) N.P.Barker et H.P.Linder

SYNONYMS

Arundo richardii Endl.; *Arundo kakao* Steud.; *Arundo australis* A.Rich.; *Gynerium zeelandicum* Steud.; *Cortaderia richardii* (Endl.) Zotov

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

Yes

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

September–November

FRUITING

October–March

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

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

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from fresh seed (as a revegetation exercise ripe seed heads can be pinned to soil surface, and if kept damp, soon germinate) and division of established plants.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FAC: Facultative

Commonly occurs as either a hydrophyte or non-hydrophyte (non-wetlands).

CULTIVATION

Commonly cultivated in the South Island, and offered by many specialist native plant nurseries. Not commonly cultivated in the North Island.

ETYMOLOGY

richardii: Named after Achille Richard (1794-1852) - a French botanist who described several New Zealand plant species

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

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

NVS CODE

AUSRIC

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 90

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Otago: 2025 | Regionally Not Threatened 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. 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.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 1 October 2006. Description adapted from Edgar & Connor (2000). Some of this factsheet information is derived from Flora of New Zealand Online and is used under a Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 New Zealand licence.

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/austroderia-richardii/>

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