

Chionochloa antarctica

COMMON NAME

snow tussock

SYNONYMS

Bromus antarcticus Hook.f.; *Danthonia antarctica* (Hook.f.) Hook.f.;
Danthonia flavescens var. *hookeri* Zotov

FAMILY

Poaceae

AUTHORITY

Chionochloa antarctica (Hook.f.) Zotov

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Grasses

NVS CODE

CHIANT

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 42

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: RR

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: RR

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon

2004 | Range Restricted

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: Auckland Islands and Campbell Island/Motu Ihupuku.

HABITAT

Dominant of tussock grassland across islands. Also in cushion bogs.



Chionochloa antarctica. Photographer: Alan Stewart, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Campbell Island. Photographer: John Barkla, Licence: CC BY.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Tall, slender, often peat-stained, pale tussock with pungent leaves often spirally twisting above and deciduous. **Leaf-sheath** to 200 mm, dark above, pale shining below, persistent, glabrous though often with many very short hairs between ribs. **Ligule** to 2 mm. **Leaf-blades** to 300 × 6 mm, flat or U-shaped, disarticulating at ligule, abaxially many glabrous ribs, adaxially below with interlocking hairs from near margins, abundant papillae above; margin glabrous. **Culm** to 1 m, internodes glabrous. **Inflorescence** to 150 mm, congested, ± triangular, glabrous except for long hairs at branch axils and below spikelets. **Spikelets** of up to 7 lightly purpled florets. **Glumes** sometimes purpled, acute or shortly awned, < adjacent lemma lobes; lower to 12 mm, 1-nerved or shortly 3-nerved, upper to 15 mm, 3–5-nerved, margin consistently long hairy below otherwise glabrous. **Lemma** to 8 mm; hairs dense at margin and aside central nerve, sometimes in other internerves but then fewer, ± reaching sinus; lateral lobes to 7 mm including awn to 3 mm or long triangular-acute; central awn to 20 mm reflexed from flat column up to 3 mm. **Palea** to 10 mm. **Callus** to 1 mm, hairs to 3 mm. **Rachilla** to 1 mm. **Lodicules** to 0.75 mm. **Anthers** to 3.5 mm. **Ovary** to 0.75 mm; stigma-styles to 4 mm. **Seed** to 2.5 mm.

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

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

FLOWERING

October–December

FRUITING

November–March

LIFE CYCLE

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

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from rooted pieces and fresh seed. Should be planted in a permanently moist soil, ideally in a cool or partially shaded situation. Dislikes humidity and will not tolerate drought.

THREATS

Not Threatened. Widespread and common within its island habitats. Listed only because by world standards it is a naturally uncommon plant biologically limited only by the extent of area it can occupy.

ETYMOLOGY

chionochloa: Snow grass

antarctica: Antarctic

WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available

ATTRIBUTION

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-antarctica/>