

# Chionochloa oreophila

## COMMON NAME

mountain snow tussock, snow patch grass

## SYNONYMS

Danthonia oreophila Petrie; Danthonia pallida Petrie

## FAMILY

Poaceae

## AUTHORITY

Chionochloa oreophila (Petrie) Zotov

## FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

## ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Grasses

## NVS CODE

CHIORE

## CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 42

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Not Threatened

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

## DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: South Island (East and West of Main Divide from Nelson to Fiordland).

## HABITAT

Subalpine to alpine. Inhabiting tussock grasslands, snow hollows and banks.



South Temple. Photographer: John Barkla, Date taken: 01/01/2013, Licence: CC BY.



upper Polnoon, Harris Mountains, Otago. Photographer: Jesse Bythell, Date taken: 25/01/2013, Licence: CC BY-NC.

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Small, pale tussock with persistent sheaths, and leaves very much shorter than slender flowering culms. **Leaf-sheath** to 50 mm, pale, shiny, glabrous, chartaceous, persistent, margins undulating, apical tuft of hairs to 3 mm. **Ligule** 0.5–1.0 mm. **Leaf-blade** to 150 × 2 mm, U- or V-shaped, persistent, spiralling, pointed, narrower than sheath, keeled, veins few, abaxially with prickle-teeth in upper 1/3, long interrib hairs frequent; adaxially with scattered prickle-teeth; margins with prickle-teeth below becoming glabrous above. **Culm** to 300 mm, internodes glabrous. **Inflorescence** to 60 mm, up to 8 spikelets on flexuous, pulvinate branches, glabrous except for few long hairs at branch axils and below spikelets. **Spikelets** small, solitary, of up to 6 purpled or golden florets. **Glumes** ± equal, to 10 mm, apex sometimes shortly awned, > adjacent lemma lobes; lower 3–5-nerved, upper 5–7-nerved, margin often long hairy below. **Lemma** to 4.5 mm; hairs long on margins, few aside central nerves and often few in all internerves, < sinus; lateral lobes to 4.5 mm including awn to 2.5 mm, or shortly acute-triangular; central awn to 5.5 mm reflexed from flat 1.5 mm column. **Palea** to 5.5 mm. **Callus** to 1.5 mm, hairs to 2.5 mm. **Rachilla** to 0.75 mm. **Lodicules** to 0.6 mm. **Anthers** to 2.5 mm. **Ovary** to 0.7 mm; stigma-styles to 3 mm. **Seeds** to 2 mm.

## MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

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

## FLOWERING

October–November

## FRUITING

November–March

## LIFE CYCLE

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

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from fresh seed and rooted pieces. Prefers a permanently damp, acidic soil and semi-shade. Plants must never be allowed to dry out.

## ETYMOLOGY

**chionochloa**: Snow grass

**oreophila**: Mountain lover

## WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available.

## ATTRIBUTION

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

## 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.

## NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

Please cite as: de Lange, P.J. (Year at time of access): *Chionochloa oreophila* Fact Sheet (content continuously updated). New Zealand Plant Conservation Network.

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

## MORE INFORMATION

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