

# Chionochloa ovata

## COMMON NAME

squat snow tussock, Fiordland snow tussock

## SYNONYMS

Danthonia ovata Buchanan; Danthonia planifolia Petrie

## FAMILY

Poaceae

## AUTHORITY

Chionochloa ovata (Buchanan) Zotov

## FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

## ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Grasses

## NVS CODE

CHIOVA

## CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 42

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: CD, DP, RR, Sp

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Range Restricted

## DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: South Island (Fiordland).

## HABITAT

Subalpine to alpine. Inhabiting wet or seasonally poorly drained ground within grasslands. Also colonising damp sites within rock crevices.

## WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FAC: Facultative

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



At south Borland (January). Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Head of basin of Takahe Valley. Photographer: Kelvin Lloyd, Licence: All rights reserved.

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Sparingly tufted tussock with shoots clothed in many old, fibrous, entire sheaths; flowering shoot taller than the leaves which eventually disarticulate at ligule; sheaths, culms, spikelets often purpled or golden. **Leaf-sheath** to 100 mm, persistent, entire, prominently ribbed, inter-rib hairs minute, apical tuft of hairs to 2 mm. **Ligule** to 3.5 mm. **Leaf-blade** to 250 × 5 mm, flat, disarticulating at ligule, spiralling above, pungent, abaxially glabrous, adaxially with scattered prickle-teeth; margin smooth or sometimes with prickle-teeth. **Culm** to 450 mm, internodes glabrous except for hairs below inflorescence. **Inflorescence** to 100 mm, shortly branched; rachis, branches and pedicels long hairy. **Spikelets** of up to 8 strongly purpled florets. **Glumes** > adjacent lemma lobes; lower to 11 mm, 1–5-nerved, acute, sometimes bifid, upper to 16 mm, 3–5–7-nerved, acute. **Lemma** to 8 mm; hairs dense on margin and aside central nerve, usually glabrous elsewhere, < sinus; lateral lobes to 7 mm acute, or produced into awn up to 5 mm, or long triangular-acute; central awn to 20 mm divergent from 1.5 mm flat column. **Palea** to 9 mm. **Callus** to 1 mm, hairs to 3 mm. **Rachilla** to 0.75 mm. **Lodicules** to 1 mm. **Anthers** to 3 mm. **Ovary** to 1 mm; stigma-styles to 2.5 mm. **Seed** to 3.25 mm.

## MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

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

## FLOWERING

October–December

## FRUITING

December–April

## 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.

## THREATS

A very widespread Fiordland endemic. No serious threats to this species are known.

## ETYMOLOGY

**chionochloa**: Snow grass

## 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. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ppees.2009.06.001>.

## MORE INFORMATION

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