

# Festuca coxii

## COMMON NAME

Cox's fescue

## SYNONYMS

*Agropyrum coxii* Petrie

## FAMILY

Poaceae

## AUTHORITY

*Festuca coxii* (Petrie) Hack.

## FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

## ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Grasses

## NVS CODE

FESCOX

## CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 56

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: IE, RR

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: IE, RR

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: IE

2004 | Range Restricted

## DISTRIBUTION

.Endemic. Chatham Islands only where it has been recorded from the islands, islets and rock stacks except the Pyramid and Western Reef

## HABITAT

Strictly coastal where it grows on rock ledges, cliff faces, rock stacks, peaty turf, amongst petrel burrows and on exposed, wind blasted ridge lines.



An image of *Festuca coxii* in full flower, Otauwae Point, Chatham Island, January 2006. Photographer: Peter J. de Lange, Licence: CC BY-NC.



*Festuca coxii* close up of flowering plant, Te Koparuparu Bay, Chatham Island, January 2006. Photographer: Peter J. de Lange, Licence: CC BY-NC.

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Glaucous to dark green tufted tussock. **Branching** intravaginal, sometimes with internodes elongating below and rooting at nodes; inflorescence short, compact, usually shorter than tall leaf-blades, nodding, with numerous long awned abundantly prickle-toothed florets borne on shortly pedicelled spikelets. **Leaf-sheath** 80–200 mm long, thin, pale much broader than leaf-blades, minutely retrorsely or antrorsely hairy between nerves becoming glabrous above, margins dark brown membranous below; apical auricles 0–0.5 mm, ciliate. **Collar** conspicuously thickened and curved. **Ligule** 0.3–0.5 mm, ciliate. **Leaf-blade** 110–400 × 0.5–0.9 mm, glaucous to dark green, softly sharp-pointed, terete to somewhat compressed, glabrous, upper surface and margin bearing numerous short (0.15 mm) antrorse or erect prickle-teeth, these diminishing in size above. **Culm** 250–450 mm, almost always included by leaf-blades; nodes 2–3 dark, glabrous, sometimes ± geniculate; internodes glabrous or densely antrorsely short hairy sometimes becoming less so below. **Panicle** 60–150 mm, narrow, compact, nodding, with 8–11 nodes of 12–18 close set, usually overlapping, spikelets; branches short, erect-appressed, basal branch 10–20 mm of 3–5 spikelets, not naked below, uppermost 6–10 spikelets solitary on short pedicels; rachis branches and pedicels prickle-toothed on margins, and frequently also densely antrorsely short hairy becoming less so above, or ± glabrous. **Spikelets** 15–30 × 5–6 mm, of 5–7 florets. **Glumes** unequal, green centrally, broad, narrowing, becoming awned, prominently keeled, glabrous except for prickle-teeth on keel above and below awn, margin hyaline sometimes short hairy and finely ciliate; usually equating with lowermost lemma, twice as long as nearest proximate internodes or in upper panicle twice proximate internodes of solitary spikelets; lower 4–10 mm, 1-nerved, upper 6–12 mm, 3-nerved. **Lemma** 6–10 mm, lobes 0 or minute, 5-nerved, slightly keeled, abundantly prickle-toothed throughout, longer teeth and/or hairs below, and on keel and at margins below; awn 6–13 mm, usually < lemma, apex deeply bifid, keels toothed to base, interkeel hairs above, margins of flanks shortly toothed; sometimes folded. **Callus** 0.3–0.6 mm, long hairy on upper margin, shorter centrally; articulation acute. **Rachilla** 1.0–1.6 mm, densely antrorsely long hairy. **Anthers** 3.7–4.2 mm. orange. **Ovary** 1.0–1.4 mm, triangular turbinate, apex with narrow rim enclosing base of styles and central tuft of hispid hairs (0.2 mm long); stigma-styles 2.5–3.0 mm. **Seed** 3.7–4.6 mm long. **Flowers** opening (not cleistogamous).

## MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

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

## SIMILAR TAXA

Similar to *F. contracta* Kirk from which it differs by its more widely spreading, rather than erect growth habit, elongate rather than flabellate intravaginal branching; awns 6–13 mm and » than lemma, rather than 1.5–2.5 mm.

## FLOWERING

November–February

## FLOWER COLOURS

Orange

## FRUITING

January–April

## LIFE CYCLE

Florets are dispersed by wind, water and attachment (Thorsen et al., 2009).

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easy from fresh seed and division of whole plants. Often short-lived and dislikes humidity.

## THREATS

Widespread and common in sites inaccessible to stock. Not seriously threatened though in common with the majority of Chatham Islands endemics its range has contracted following human settlement.

## ETYMOLOGY

**festuca**: From the Latin festuca 'stem' or 'blade of 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.

## MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/festuca-coxii/>