

Lepturus repens

SYNONYMS

Lepturus cinereus Burcham; *Lepturus repens* var. *cinereus* (Burcham) Fosberg

FAMILY

Poaceae

AUTHORITY

Lepturus repens

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

No

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Grasses

NVS CODE

LEPREP

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 52-54

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Non-resident Native – Vagrant | Qualifiers: SO

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Non-resident Native – Vagrant | Qualifiers: SO

2009 | Non-resident Native – Vagrant | Qualifiers: SO, OL

2004 | Non-resident Native – Vagrant

DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. In New Zealand known only from North Chanter, Dayrell and Napier Islands, part of the Herald Islets which form the northern-most island chain of the Kermadec Islands group. Abundant on islands and adjacent landmasses throughout the warmer parts of the Pacific and Indian Oceans.

HABITAT

In New Zealand this species is known only from the Herald Islets where it grows on coral makatea and basalt rock often in association with petrel nesting sites. One population grows within metres of the high tide mark/splash zone on basalt rock, the rest along the summit ridges of two small islands.



Lepturus repens growing on coral sand.
Photographer: Peter J. de Lange, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Lepturus repens growing on basalt and coral rubble within Casuarina forest. Photographer: Peter J. de Lange, Licence: CC BY-NC.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Semi-prostrate, grey-green to rather glaucous, widely spreading perennial grass forming dense semi-erect mats up to 2 m or more in diameter, from which are produced numerous long trailing stolons. **Stolons** rooting at nodes; branching intravaginal. **Leaf-sheath** coriaceous, finely scabrid between ribs, rarely with a few long wispy hairs. **Ligule** 0.5 mm, membranous, minutely ciliate. **Collar** finely scabrid. **Leaf-blade** 20–60 × 20–60 mm, lanceolate, coriaceous, glaucous, undersides smooth but scabrid near the acute apex, upper surface and margins scabrid. **Culm** erect to suberect, rigid and wiry, internodes glabrous. **Racemes** inconspicuous, borne singly at tips of lateral branches, 35–70 × 3 mm, cylindrical; rachis fragile, with numerous, fine, finely scabrid nerves. **Spikelets** 5–7 mm, each with a single floret embedded in the rachis and concealed by the upper glume. **Glumes** coriaceous, lanceolate, scabrid above, tapering to an acute apex; lower usually absent except on uppermost spikelet, upper > spikelet and exceeding the rachis cavity, 7-nerved. **Lemma** 3 mm, 3-nerved, firmly membranous, oblong-lanceolate, glabrous below, usually hairy in upper ½. **Palea** about the same size as the lemma, keel minutely ciliate, interkeel minutely pubescent. **Lodicules** oblong, denticulate, distally fleshy otherwise chartaceous. **Anthers** 1.2 mm.

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

Key to the grasses of New Zealand

SIMILAR TAXA

In New Zealand none. The unusual, bilaterally cylindrical inflorescence bearing spikelets alternately arranged on opposite sides of a thickened fragile rachis are particularly distinctive.

FLOWERING

Throughout the year

FRUITING

Throughout the year

LIFE CYCLE

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

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easy from rooted pieces and fresh seed. However, extremely cold sensitive. Best in a free draining medium. Should be planted in a sunny, warm, and sheltered spot or kept in a pot. An ideal sand binding grass for bach lawns in the far north of New Zealand.

THREATS

Naturally uncommon being confined in the New Zealand Botanical region to three small islands with a total population area of probably < 5 square metres. New Zealand plants have yet to be observed producing seed. This grass reaches its world southern limit in the Kermadec Island group and it would seem that even there the habitat for it is fairly marginal.

ETYMOLOGY

repens: From Latin *reperere* meaning to creep, means creeping

WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available.

TAXONOMIC NOTES

Lepturus repens is extremely variable and NZPCN consider the distinctions offered for var. *cinereus* (as used by Edgar & Connor 2000) dubious. Plants of Kermadec islands origin in cultivation initially have a widely creeping growth habit but soon also develop an erect growth habit. In the Pacific a wide range of forms can be found in a single site. Therefore we follow de Lange & Rolfe (2010) in treating the Kermadec Islands plants as *Lepturus repens* s.s. Further research into this variation is required.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange July 2005 and updated 26 June 2011. Description adapted from Edgar & Connor (2000) by P.J. de Lange July 2005.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

- de Lange PJ, Rolfe JR. 2010. New Zealand Indigenous Vascular Plant Checklist. New Zealand Plant Conservation Network, Wellington, NZ. 164 p.
- Edgar E, Connor HE. 2000. Flora of New Zealand. Vol. V. Grasses. Manaaki Whenua Press, Christchurch, NZ. 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.

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/lepturus-repens/>