

# Poa tennantiana

## COMMON NAME

muttonbird poa

## SYNONYMS

*Poa foliosa* var. *tennantiana* (Petrie) Cheeseman

## FAMILY

Poaceae

## AUTHORITY

*Poa tennantiana* Petrie

## FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

## ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Grasses

## NVS CODE

POATEN

## CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 56

## 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: South (Otago (Taieri River Mouth), Stewart, Snares and Auckland Islands. It has not been seen on the Auckland Islands recently.

## HABITAT

Coastal usually in or near sea bird nesting grounds, on forest margins, clearings, in low scrub, on cliff faces and damp banks.



## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Yellow-green, rather stout, stiff-leaved, perennial tussock-forming grass up to 1 m tall, arising from a strong rhizomatous base covered by abundant fibrous remnants of leaf-sheaths; branching intravaginal; leaf-blades persistent. **Leaf-sheath** submembranous, striate, densely, retrorsely, minutely pubescent-scabrid between ribs in basal leaves, glabrous in cauline leaves, very light brown, later becoming darker and shredding into fibres. **Ligule** 6–16 mm, apically glabrous, entire, narrowed to a long fine point, abaxially short-pubescent. **Leaf-blade** 160–380 x 4.5–9.0 mm, flat, finely striate, abaxially smooth, adaxially minutely papillose, very rarely minutely ciliate-scabrid on ribs; margins ciliate-fimbriate for a short distance above ligule, otherwise glabrous, gradually narrowed to straight-sided acute tip. **Culm** 150–330 mm, internodes glabrous. **Panicle** 90–160 mm, broad, dense but much-branched, upper branches almost completely hidden by numerous, rather small spikelets, lower branches naked towards base; rachis smooth, branches and pedicels ± scabrid to occasionally smooth. **Spikelets** 3.5–4.5 mm, 2–3-flowered, light brown. **Glumes** subequal, ovate-lanceolate, acute, glabrous; lower 2.0–2.5 mm, 1-nerved, upper 2.5–3.0 mm, 3-nerved; midnerve near tip and margins with sparse prickle-teeth. **Lemma** 3.0–3.5 mm, 5-nerved, ovate-elliptic, minutely pubescent-scabrid, nerves longer ciliate on lower  $\frac{1}{3}$ , acute, or midnerve very shortly excurrent. **Palea** 2.5–3.0 mm, keels scabrid in upper  $\frac{1}{2}$ , interkeel smooth or with a few prickle-teeth. **Callus** glabrous. **Rachilla** c. 0.5 mm, glabrous; prolongation twice as long. **Lodicules** 0.5–0.8 mm. **Anthers** 1.0–1.5 mm. **Seed** 1.5 x 0.5 mm.

## MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

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

## SIMILAR TAXA

Similar to *Poa foliosa* (Hook.f.) Hook.f. which is a superficially similar southern New Zealand robust grass of coastal areas, especially near sea bird nesting grounds. *Poa tennantiana* differs from *P. foliosa* by its monoecious rather than dioecious habit, yellow-green rather than green leaves, by the lower leaf-sheaths scabrid between the nerves, rather than smooth, and by the glabrous rather than hairy (hairs crinkly in a prominent tuft) callus.

## FLOWERING

October–December

## FRUITING

November–April

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from fresh seed and rooted pieces. Dislikes humidity and will not flower or thrive in warm climates.

## THREATS

Not threatened. Listed because it is a narrow range endemic of mainly offshore island. It is abundant in most of its known locations with no obvious threats.

## ETYMOLOGY

**poa**: Meadow grass

**tennantiana**: After Tennant, teacher and member of the 1907 expedition to the subantarctic islands

## WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available.

## ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange June 2005. Description modified from Edgar and Connor (2000).

## REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Edgar E, Connor HE. 2000. Flora of New Zealand. Vol. V. Grasses. Manaaki Whenua Press, Christchurch, NZ. 650 p.

## MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/poa-tennantiana/>