

Puccinellia raroflorens

COMMON NAME

saltgrass

SYNONYMS

None

FAMILY

Poaceae

AUTHORITY

Puccinellia raroflorens Edgar

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Grasses

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 56

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: CD, DP, RR

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: CD, DP

2009 | Threatened – Nationally Critical | Qualifiers: CD, DP

2004 | Threatened – Nationally Critical

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. South Island (Central Otago) and Stewart Island. Known from the salt pans of Central Otago and in coastal sites on Stewart Island (Paterson Inlet and Mason Bay).

HABITAT

A species of inland salt pans, salt slicks, and coastal salt encrusted sand depressions. It has also been collected from near barren, stony ground within an estuary.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Diminutive perennial grass forming diffuse mats up to 2 m diam. and 450 mm high. Plants usually partially covered in soil, rarely flowering with only the short, narrow, dull green leaves visible. **Branching** extravaginal. **Leaf-sheath** hairless, wider than leaf-blade, ribs few, distinct. **Ligule** 0.2–0.6 mm, obtuse or truncate, transparent. **Leaf-blade** 10–30 × 0.2–0.5 mm, hair-like, inrolled, sometimes curled, hairless, tips subacute, margins minutely scabrid. **Culm** entirely hidden by leaf-sheaths. **Panicle** rarely present, 10–16 mm, overtopped by leaves, bearing 12 spikelets. **Spikelets** 3–4–(4.8) mm, 4–6-flowered, green to brownish green. **Glumes** unequal, ovate, obtuse; lower 0.6–1 mm, 1-nerved, upper 1.1–1.4 mm, 3-nerved. **Lemma** 1.8–2.5 mm, 5-nerved, ovate-elliptic, hairless. **Anthers** 0.4–0.6 mm. **Seeds** 1.2–1.6 × 0.6–0.7 mm.

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

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



Puccinellia raroflorens. Photographer: John Barkla, Licence: CC BY.



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SIMILAR TAXA

This species can be distinguished from all other New Zealand *Puccinellia* Parl. in that it has extravaginal innovation shoots. Flowering plants are rarely seen. When present they differ from other *Puccinellia* in that the flowering panicles rarely overtop the surrounding leaves.

FLOWERING

November–January

FRUITING

November–February

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Can be grown by the division of whole plants. Fresh seed should germinate easily.

THREATS

This species is seriously threatened throughout its known mainland range because of the encroachment of salt-tolerant weeds within the saline soil habitats of Central Otago. Its status on Stewart Island remains unclear being known from just two collections made from widely separated localities and 20 years apart.

ETYMOLOGY

puccinellia: After the italian botanist Benedetto Puccinelli (1808 - 1850).

raroflorens: From the Latin raro 'sporadic' and florens 'flowering'

WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available. A few plants are held by specialist growers.

ATTRIBUTION

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/puccinellia-raroflorens/>