

Rytidosperma merum

SYNONYMS

Austrodanthonia mera (Connor et Edgar) H.P.Linder

FAMILY

Poaceae

AUTHORITY

Rytidosperma merum Connor et Edgar

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Grasses

NVS CODE

RYTMER

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

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

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: DP, Sp

2009 | Data Deficient | Qualifiers: DP

2004 | Sparse

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: North Island (Kaingaroa Plains and Kaimanawa Mountains, eastern Wairarapa and Aorangi Range), South Island (Marlborough, Canterbury, Otago—near Alexandra and Sutton Salt Lakes, Middlemarch).

HABITAT

Lowland to montane (100–800 m a.s.l.) in dry sites, usually in open short-tussock grassland but also on rock outcrops.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Rather fine-leaved, densely tufted, light green, shortly rhizomatous grass. Older growth distinctly straw-coloured, with long, drooping or trailing culms; leaves very much less than culms; branching extra or intervaginal. **Leaf-sheath** pale stramineous, glabrous with a sparse apical tuft of hairs up to 1.5 mm long. **Ligule** 0.1–0.2 mm. **Leaf-blade** 250–400 mm, more or less flat, glabrous, occasionally with a few sparse, scattered hairs, margins scabrid. **Culm** very slender, tawny with smooth internodes otherwise minutely scabrid below inflorescence, elongating to 0.14 m (or more) at maturity. **Inflorescence** a raceme or racemose panicle with 1–2 short branches at base, slender to 80 mm, comprising few narrow, sessile to subsessile spikelets; rachise and pedicels finely scabrid with longer fine hairs on margins especially below spikelets. **Spikelets** 4–6-flowered, awns exerted from glumes. **Glumes** light green, occasionally purplish, lanceolate, subobtuse 7–15 mm, more or less equal, 5–7-nerved. **Lemma** 2.5–4 mm, 7–9-nerved, upper row of hairs in small marginal tufts only, about equal to lemma or occasionally with upper tufts absent, lower row in small marginal tufts only, or a few small tufts or single hairs on margin; lobes 3–8.5 mm, soon tapering to a fine awn; central awn 6.5–14 mm, column 2.5–3.5 mm. **Palea** 2.5–5 mm, > upper lemma hairs, interkeel and margins glabrous. **Callus** 0.6–1 mm, marginal hair tufts rarely reaching base of lower lateral tufts. **Rachilla** 0.5–0.6 mm. **Anthers** 0.3–1.5 mm. **Seed** 1.7–2.5 × 0.9–1.2 mm.



Sutton Salt Lake, April. Photographer: John Barkla, Licence: CC BY.

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

Key to the grasses of New Zealand

SIMILAR TAXA

One of the more distinctive species in *Rytidosperma*. Most frequently confused with the naturalised *R. racemosum* (R.Br.) Connor et Edgar from which it differs by the much shorter leaves than culms, finer leaves, long, drooping and trailing culms, and by the lemma hairs in two pairs of marginal tufts, rarely with a few single hairs in a lower row, and by the short, stout, callus up to 1 mm long. In *R. racemosum* the lemma hairs form a continuous lower row, and an interrupted, tufted, upper row, and the callus is long (up to 1.5 mm) and distinctly narrower than in *R. merum*.

FLOWERING

October–December

FRUITING

November–April

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from fresh seed and rooted pieces. Dislikes humidity.

THREATS

Not known to be threatened but apparently very uncommon throughout its range. Can be very common at the few sites it is known from.

ETYMOLOGY

rytidosperma: Wrinkled seed

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. Manaaki Whenua Press, Christchurch, NZ. 650 p.

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/rytidosperma-merum/>