

# Anemanthele lessoniana

## COMMON NAME

gossamer grass

## SYNONYMS

*Agrostis lessoniana* Steud., *Oryzopsis lessoniana* (Steud.) Veldkamp, *Agrostis procera* A.Rich., *Dichelachne procera* Steud., *D. rigida* Steud., *Oryzopsis rigida* (Steud.) Zotov, *Agrostis rigida* A.Rich., *Apera arundinacea* Hook.f., *Stipa arundinacea* (Hook.f.) Benth., *Apera purpurascens* Colenso

## FAMILY

Poaceae

## AUTHORITY

*Anemanthele lessoniana* (Steud.) Veldkamp

## FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

## ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

## ENDEMIC GENUS

Yes

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Grasses

## NVS CODE

ANELES

## CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 40-44

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

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

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

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

2009 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: DP

2004 | Sparse

## DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: North Island (North Auckland, Waikato and southern third of the island), South Island (from Nelson and Marlborough south, mainly in the east). Also occurs as a cultivation escape in some places, e.g., Auckland City.

## HABITAT

Sea level to montane forest, forest margins, scrub and on cliff faces and associated talus.



Seedling. Naturalised on basalt lava flow. Auckland. Feb 2007. Photographer: Peter J. de Lange, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Naturalised on basalt lava flow. Auckland. Feb 2007. Photographer: Peter J. de Lange, Licence: CC BY-NC.

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Erect, tufted, shortly rhizomatous perennial, bearing densely leafy culms surmounted by delicate, nodding panicles. **Leaf-sheath** to 150 mm, outer margin ciliate. **Ligule** 1.5 mm, asymmetrical, entire to fimbriate. **Leaf-blade** 450 × 6 mm, stiff, involute or flat, upper surface shining, apex acute, undersides smooth, dull, margins scabrid. **Culm** to 750 mm, simple, erect to nodding, internodes smooth, occasionally scabrid below panicle. **Panicle** 600 mm; purplish-red or green, branches capillary, spreading, whorled; rachis slender, smooth to scaberulous, branches and pedicels scaberulous. **Spikelets** laterally subcompressed, pale green to purplish. **Glumes** subequal, 2.5–3.5 mm, hyaline, acute to acuminate, keel scabrid; lower linear-lanceolate, 1-nerved, upper elliptic-lanceolate, 1–3-nerved. **Flowers** perfect. **Lemma** 2 mm, 3-nerved, elliptic-oblong, awn to 8 mm, scabrid, curved, caducous. **Callus** minute, rounded, ringed by very minute hairs. **Anther** 1, 0.8–1.4 mm, apically thickened.

## MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

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

## SIMILAR TAXA

A most distinctive and singular species which could only be confused with the common introduced grass *Piptatherum miliaceum* (L.) Coss. From that species *Anemanthele* is most readily distinguished by its spikelets with have laterally subcompressed rather than dorsally compressed florets bearing one rather than three stamens.

## FLOWERING

(October)–January–(March)

## FRUITING

(November)–February–(May)

## LIFE CYCLE

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

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easy from fresh seed, often naturalises in gardens and can become very invasive. Can be grown in a variety of situations but does best in dry soil in full sun or partial shade under trees. Does not like damp soils.

## ETYMOLOGY

**lessoniana**: Named after René Primevère Lesson who was a 19th century French botanist and surgeon

## WHERE TO BUY

Very common in cultivation and sold by most plant retail nurseries, though often under a variety of incorrect names.

## ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared by P.J. de Lange for NZPCN (1 June 2013)

## REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

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. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ppees.2009.06.001>.

## NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

Please cite as: de Lange, P.J. (Year at time of access): *Anemanthele lessoniana* Fact Sheet (content continuously updated). New Zealand Plant Conservation Network.

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/anemanthele-lessoniana/> (Date website was queried)

## MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/anemanthele-lessoniana/>