

Microlaena stipoides

COMMON NAME

meadow rice grass, slender rice grass

SYNONYMS

Ehrharta stipoides Labill.; *Microlaena stipoides* (Labill.) R.Br. var. *stipoides*

FAMILY

Poaceae

AUTHORITY

Microlaena stipoides (Labill.) R.Br.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

No

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Grasses

NVS CODE

MICSTI

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

$2n = 48$

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

DISTRIBUTION

North Island: throughout. South Island: throughout, less frequent in Canterbury, Otago, and Westland, absent in Fiordland; Stewart Island. Kermadec Islands: Raoul Island. Chatham Islands.

Also indigenous to Australia and Malesia.

There is every reason to believe that Australian races are here as migrants, but it may be impossible to differentiate between them and indigenous plants, however some races appear larger.

HABITAT

Open lowland forest and mānuka-kānuka scrub, ruderal and in rough pasture; sea level to 1,300 m.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACU: Facultative Upland

Occasionally is a hydrophyte but usually occurs in uplands (non-wetlands).



Kerikeri River. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 09/03/2007, Licence: CC BY.



Kerikeri River. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 09/03/2007, Licence: CC BY.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Rhizomatous perennial with extravaginal branching, and much branched, multinoded stems of many cauline, often stiff hairy leaves, and often purpled spikelets on erectly branched narrow panicles. **Branching** extravaginal; rhizomes sometimes short; cataphylls chaffy. **Leaf-sheath** tight, short hairy or glabrous, overlapping node above, keel obscure. **Ligule** to 0.5 mm, finely erose, ciliate. **Auricles** 2, small, margin hairs (c. 3 mm) few. **Collar** short stiff hairy. **Leaf-blade** 5–25 cm × 2–5 mm wide, abaxially and adaxially abundantly stiff hairy sometimes more so abaxially, midrib prominent; margins with close-set, sharp teeth, retrorse below antrorse above, sometimes thickened, white, undulating. **Culm** to 85 cm, internodes many, glabrous, sometimes longitudinally grooved. **Panicle** 10–25 cm, narrow, slender, internodes short, branches erect to 5 cm, > internodes, rachis longitudinally grooved; branches and pedicels finely scabrid. **Spikelets** 25–35 mm, on slender finely scabrid pedicels; \emptyset lemmas often purple or purple-suffused. **Glumes** \pm equal, 1-nerved, entire, often purple, margins ciliate, distant from \emptyset lemmas, < callus hairs; lower to 0.8 mm, upper to 1.5 mm. **Callus** 1–1.5–2 mm, clothed in hairs to 2 mm. **Lower \emptyset lemma** 12–20–30 mm, 5–7-nerved, scabrid, margin short (0.25 mm) hairy, awn > $\frac{1}{2}$ lemma length. **Upper \emptyset lemma** 17–26–35 mm, prickly-toothed throughout or glabrous below and prickled above, 5–7-nerved, awn > $\frac{1}{2}$ lemma length; callus hairs 0.  lemma 5–7–9 mm, 5–7-nerved, shining, smooth except for teeth on upper $\frac{1}{2}$ of keel, shortly awned (0.1–1.0 mm) from shortly lobed ciliate apex, margins hyaline; when cleistogamous often included by upper \emptyset lemma. **Palea** membranous, hyaline, produced into a mucro or becoming acute, apex ciliate; dimorphic, 4–6–8 mm in chasmogamous flowers, 2–3–4 mm in cleistogamous flowers. **Lodicules** 2, 1–2–2.7 mm in chasmogamous flowers occasionally hair-tipped, falling with caryopsis; 0 in cleistogamous flowers. **Stamens** 2–3–4; anthers 1.5–2.5–4.2 mm in chasmogamous flowers, (1)–2–3–4, 0.2–0.4–1.0 mm in cleistogamous flowers. **Gynoecium**: ovary 0.8–1.2 mm; stigma-styles 1.2–2.5–4.0 mm in chasmogamous flowers, 0.8–1.4–2.0 mm in cleistogamous flowers, stigma branches reaching ovary. **Caryopsis** laterally compressed, finely wrinkled, often falling free, 3.5–4.5–5.5 mm in chasmogamous flowers, 2–3.8–5.8 in cleistogamous flowers; embryo 0.6–1.0 mm. $2n = 48$.

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

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

ETYMOLOGY

microlaena: Small cover (outer scales of spikelet)

stipoides: Like *Stipa*, another grass

WHERE TO BUY

Occasionally sold by specialist native plant nurseries. However, often present in gardens as a lawn and hedge weed.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared by Marley Ford (28 December 2021). Brief description, Distribution, Habitat, and Features sections copied from Edgar & Connor (2010).

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Edgar E, Connor HE. 2010. Flora of New Zealand. Vol. V. Grasses, 2nd edition. Manaaki Whenua Press, Christchurch, NZ. 650 p.

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/microlaena-stipoides/>