



Rytidosperma merum

Common Name(s):

Slender bristle grass

Current Threat Status (2012):

Nationally Vulnerable

Distribution:

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

Habitat:

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

Features*:

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. 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, subobtusate 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 x 0.9–1.2 mm.

Flowering:

October - December

Fruiting:

November - April

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

*Attribution:

Description modified from Edgar and Connor (2000).

References and further reading:

Edgar, E.; Connor, H.E. 2000: Flora of New Zealand. Vol. V. Grasses. Christchurch, Manaaki Whenua Press. 650 pp.

For more information, visit:

http://nzpcn.org.nz/flora_details.asp?ID=313



Caption: Sutton Salt Lake, April

Photographer: John Barkla