

# Nassella tussock

**Botanical name:** *Nassella trichotoma*  
(*Stipa trichotoma*)

**Family:** Poaceae

Common names: nassella, serrated tussock

## Identification:

- Tussock-like **perennial** growing in clumps up to 70cm x 70cm.
- **Leaves** are **bright green** and upright in small plants, becoming duller and more drooping as plants mature. Leaves are finer in appearance than the more common silver tussock and feel **rough** when rubbed from tip to base.
- **Stem** bases are whitish and swollen (like small shallots). When squeezed, the base feels very hard. When grubbed out, nassella **divides easily** into small clumps.
- **Roots** are deep, **fibrous** and **matted**, making even small plants difficult to pull out.
- **Flower heads** are **purple** and carried on slender stalks from October to December. They are erect when young and droop over leaves when mature.
- **Seeds** are small, oval and **purplish-brown** with a very long bristle at the tip. Nassella tussock is most obvious when flowers or seeds are present.



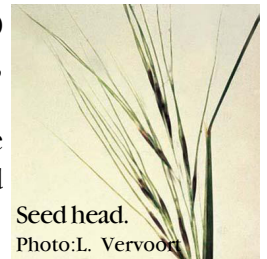
Drooping leaves. Photo: Plant Protection Society



Nassella tussock. Photo: Environment Canterbury

## Why is it a problem?

- Nassella tussock is extremely adaptable and can be found growing in open grasslands. It is unpalatable to stock and will displace other plant species.
- Mature plants can produce up to 120,000 seeds which are dispersed by wind, water, stock, clothing and machinery.
- Nassella tussock is difficult to recognise and distinguish from other tussocks and sedges, both native and introduced.



Seed head.

Photo: L. Vervoort

## Status:

Nassella tussock is a plant pest in Canterbury's Regional Pest Management Strategy. Land occupiers must eradicate plants by 31 October each year to prevent seeding.

## Control:

Control infestations by grubbing prior to flowering. Once flowers are present, even if the plant is grubbed, the seed will still develop and remain viable. All roots should be removed from the ground and excess soil shaken off. Chemical application can be used for dense infestations and should be applied during the growing season.

## Commonly confused species:

Hard tussock (*Festuca novae-zelandiae*) – blades not as rough and more bluish-green, rarely drooping, stem base not as swollen or hard.

Silver tussock (*Poa cita*) – blades are less slender, smoother and more golden than nassella tussock. Flower heads are shorter, less drooping and are golden.

For more information, please email  
[weeds@ecan.govt.nz](mailto:weeds@ecan.govt.nz)



White stem bases. Photo: K. McCombs