

Poa labillardierei

Common name – Common Tussock Grass

Poa labillardierei - Tussock Grass is an Australian perennial grass renowned for its ecological importance, ornamental beauty, and diverse habitats across various regions of Australia. It thrives in a variety of habitats across Australia, from coastal regions to inland areas. It is often found in open forests, heathlands, grasslands, and alpine meadows. Its ability to grow in diverse conditions makes it a vital component of many ecosystems, providing shelter and food for various wildlife species.

It typically grows in a dense clump or tussock up to 1m high and 70cm wide with narrow, wiry leaves. It is tough and is well adapted to the harsh Australian climate, being drought tolerant and not fussy with soil types. The grass has a remarkable ability to regenerate after fire.

Poa labillardierei is a perennial and stays green throughout the year. It has an attractive, dense form with long, fine, blade-like leaves and a weeping habit. Leaves are rough on the underside and around 80 cm long and 3.5mm wide. Depending on lighting, they can shift from grey-green to olive-green to bluish-green.



Flowers

The grass flowers most of the year. In grasses, the flowering unit is called a spikelet. It is made up of a number of parts including husks (petals) and florets (small flowers that produce the seeds). In Tussock Grass the florets are short, hairy and often have a pinkish tinge and resemble wheat florets.

However, the flowerhead (spikelets) grow on loosely spreading stems, and form open plumes, up to 25cm long, with feathery spreading branches that hover over the tussocks.

Seeds are produced between November and January and look like typical small grass seeds. The seeds can germinate in frost and can tolerate a temperature in the 0 to -5 °C. They germinate in 1 to 6 weeks and may have a 2 to 3 month after ripening period.



Interesting Facts

Poa, Greek for fodder/grass; *labillardierei* for French botanist Jacques Labillardière.

Poa labillardierei plays a crucial role in maintaining ecosystem health. Its tussock-forming growth helps prevent soil erosion by stabilizing the ground with its extensive root system. Additionally, it offers nesting sites and protective cover for small animals and birds. Its seeds serve as a food source for numerous birds and insects, contributing to the biodiversity of its habitats.

Poa labillardierei holds cultural significance among Indigenous Australian communities. Some indigenous groups used the grass for weaving baskets, mats, or ceremonial items due to its pliable nature and strength and was used for various purposes, such as treating wounds or other ailments.

The grass has low grazing value, with a digestibility range from 42-69 % and crude protein 4-12%