

Identification of Serrated Tussock

General Appearance

Serrated Tussock is a perennial tussock grass that grows up to 60cm tall.

Serrated Tussock is not readily grazed and will stand out in a pasture, especially in dry times when feed is scarce. It will also stay green while other grasses brown off. However, older leaves appear brown at the base.



Flowers

Serrated Tussock has weeping flower heads that lay over to almost ground level. These look somewhat like a horse's mane. This is quite different to most native grasses which have upright flower heads.

The flower heads also have a distinctive purple colour but do turn golden as the seed ripens later in the season.

The Leaves

The leaves of Serrated Tussock are very fine (about 0.5mm in diameter). They are also hairless and have swollen, white bases.

The leaves feel rough to touch due to their fine serrations. These serrations can be felt if you draw a leaf blade, from tip to base, through your fingers. However, some native grasses also have serrated leaves.

The leaves are tightly rolled, narrow, stiff and upright, forming a round shaped blade. This can be felt if you roll the leaf blade between your thumb and index finger. This is unlike many native grasses that have flat edges on their leaf blades.

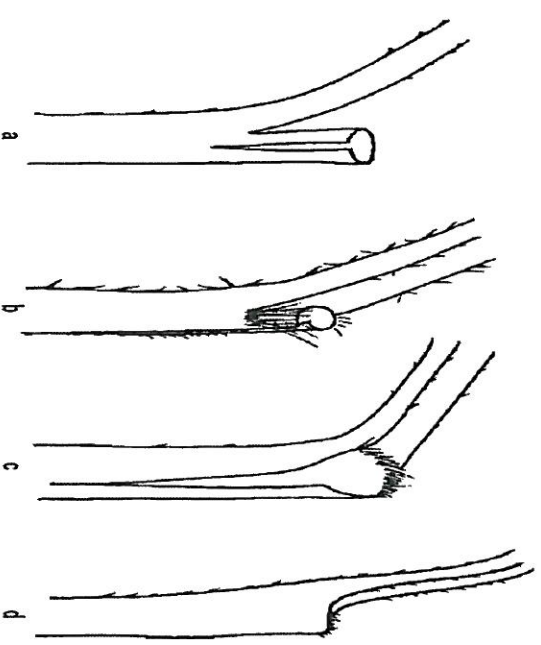


The Ligule

The only true way to correctly identifying Serrated Tussock from other tussock grasses is by examining its ligule.

The ligule is the part of the plant where the leaf blade joins the leaf sheath at its base. This can be found by tracing down a leaf until you reach its junction with the sheath. You then bend back the leaf to expose the ligule.

The ligule of Serrated Tussock is white, hairless and long (about 1mm). To see this properly, you may need a small magnifying glass.



- a—Serrated Tussock (*Nassella trichotoma*),
- b—Corkscrew Grass (*Stipa scabra*),
- c—Snow Grass (*Poa sieberana*),
- d—Tussocky Poa (*Poa labillardieri*)

Seasonal Appearance of Serrated Tussock



Late Autumn and Winter

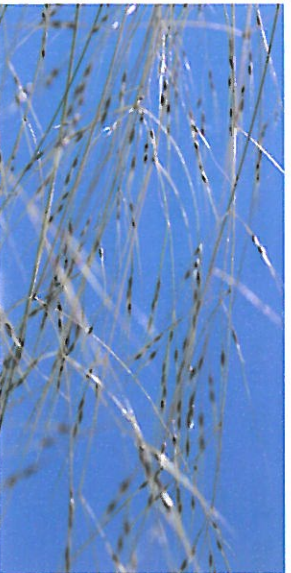
Tussocks have a lime green appearance, leaf tips turn a bleached golden yellow colour after frost.



Late Spring to Early Summer

This is the time of flowering.

The tussocks appear bright green at the base with weeping flower heads, purple in colour.



Late Summer

This is the time the seed is ripening.

The Tussock has a bright green base with brownish leaf tips.

The best way of beating Serrated Tussock is to detect it early, control it using the appropriate measures and monitor its progress



For more information regarding identification and control, contact:

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Serrated Tussock (*Nassella Trichotoma*)

Serrated Tussock is native to South America and was possibly introduced into the Northern Tablelands area in meadow hay in the 1950s. Since then it has become widespread throughout the region.



Serrated Tussock reduces the carrying capacity of land more than any other weed in Australia

Why is it so bad?

- Serrated Tussock plants produce more than 100 000 seeds and can live up to 20 years.
- Serrated Tussock crowds out other grasses and will take over pastures.
- Animals forced to eat Serrated Tussock will die because it is not digestible.