

# Identification of Serrated Tussock

*Nassella trichotoma*



Photo: Chelsea Wardrope

## Spring/Summer



Photo: DPI, Victoria

Serrated tussock turns a lime green colour in warmer months where most other native species yellow. It sets seed from October to March and seeds will easily germinate in bare ground where there are no competitive perennial pastures or native grasses.

## Autumn/Winter



Photo: Ivan Carter

Serrated tussock is bleached in late autumn and winter by frosts and cooler weather turning a golden yellow colour.

# Identification of Serrated Tussock

## Leaves

Serrated tussock leaves are up to 50cm long, are thin and roll smoothly between your thumb and index finger (as shown), most native species leaves are folded and feel as though they have flat edges, so don't roll easily. Serrated tussock leaves have fine serrations that can be felt if the finger and thumb are carefully drawn from the tip of the leaf towards the base of the plant.



Photo: Chelsea Wardrope



Photo: DPI, Victoria



Photo: DPI, Victoria



Photo: DPI, Victoria

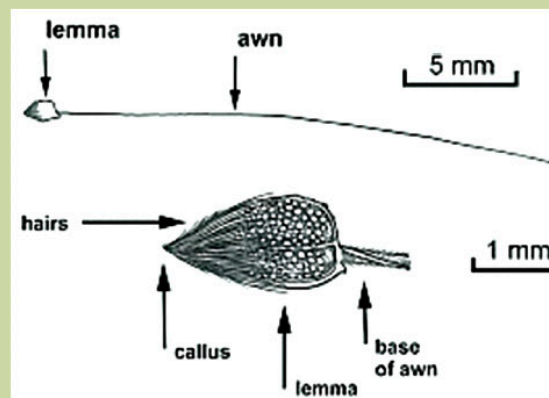
Notice the cylindrical cross-section of serrated tussock due to the leaf blade being tightly rolled (far left), as opposed to the 'V' shape of the native (Silver) tussock (left).

## The Ligule

Serrated tussock has a small, (1 mm long) white, hairless ligule. The ligule can be found at the junction where the leaf meets the stem. To find the ligule, trace a leaf down towards the base of the plant to where it meets with the stem (junction). Carefully separate the leaf from the stem by bending the leaf backwards. The ligule of serrated tussock is white and has a rounded tip. Similar looking native grasses have smaller, differently shaped or hair-fringed ligules.



Photo: DPI, Victoria



## Seeds

Serrated tussock seeds are 1.5-2 mm long and enclosed in two reddish-brown or purple bracts (glumes) which are 6-10 mm long and taper to a point. The seed itself has a tuft of short, white hairs at one end and a twisted awn at the other. In Victoria, the awn can be up to 35 mm long, in other states it is about 25 mm long.



Photo: DEPI, Victoria

A juvenile serrated tussock plant, note the fine green erect leaves that will stay green throughout summer.

## Serrated Tussock

## Native Grasses

Serrated tussock (ST)  
*Nassella trichotoma*

Native (Silver) tussock  
*Poa labillardieri*

Wallaby grass  
*Austrodanthonia* spp.

Kangaroo grass  
*Themeda triandra*

Whole plant



Photo: Roger MacRaidl, DPI Victoria



Photo: DPI Victoria



Photo: Native Seeds Pty Ltd



Photo: Native Seeds Pty Ltd

Tufted perennial grass growing to 50 cm high. Immature plants look very similar to MFG but mature ST plants have a droopy appearance. Lime green in warmer months and bleached yellow in cooler months.

Tufted perennial grass growing to 80 cm high. It is similar in size and appearance to ST from a distance but on a closer look it can be distinguished by its leaves and flowers.

A fine leaved tufted perennial grass that remains green all year and grows to 30-80 cm high.

An erect tufted perennial grass growing 1.5 m high and 50 cm wide. Leaves and seeds are very different to serrated tussock.

Flower and seed head



Photo: DPI Victoria



Photo: DPI Victoria



Photo: Roger MacRaidl, DPI Victoria



Photo: VSTWP

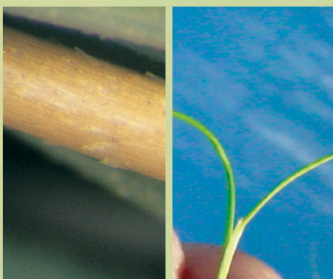
Flower heads have a distinct purple colour as seeds ripen in late spring and summer. Arrangement of flowerhead is very different from MFG. ST has an open and dispersed arrangement as shown in the image. The entire flowering stem breaks away from the plant in spring and summer unlike natives which release their seeds individually.

*Poa* seeds have an open arrangement like ST but lack any awns. Native (silver) tussock flowers in spring and summer, seeds are cream in colour and will be dispersed individually unlike ST where the entire flowering stem breaks away from the plant.

Flowering in Spring, the seeds are cream in colour and have a fluffy appearance standing high above the plant at 30-100 cm high.

Attractive seed heads form in summer and are 30-50 cm long on stems with dark nodes. The distinctive seeds are a rusty red colour.

Leaf blade and ligule



Photos: Jean Bentley, Anna Grech

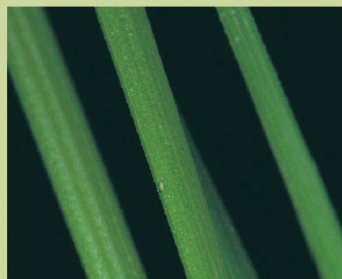


Photo: Jean Bentley



Photo: Jean Bentley

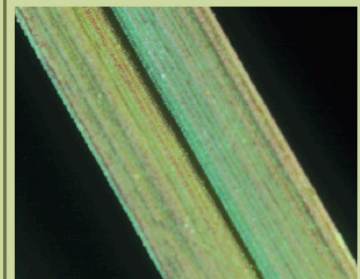


Photo: DPI New South Wales

Leaves are stiff, narrow, up to 50 cm long and will roll smoothly between your thumb and forefinger. Serrations can be felt when you run your fingers towards the base of the plant, although these serrations are not visible to the eye. Ligule is approximately 1 mm long, white and hairless.

Leaves are up to 80 cm long are folded flat and will not roll smoothly between the thumb and forefinger like ST and MFG. Small serrations can be felt when running your thumb and forefinger towards the base of the plant like MFG and ST. The ligule is stiff and membranous.

The fine leaves are grey-green to dark-green in colour with a purple leaf base. The leaves are folded at the bud (base of the plant) and there are parallel lines of thickening on the leaf blade. Long hairs are present on the ligule.

Leaves are long and thin and are not tightly rolled like ST or MFG. At maturity leaf colour changes from green to red/brown/purple. Generally, leaves are green/grey in cooler months and orange and brown in warmer months. A hairy ligule is present.

# Identification of Serrated Tussock

## SERRATED TUSSOCK IN SEED Late Spring and Early Summer



A small serrated tussock plant in seed during late spring and early summer, note the bright green leaves in early summer.



Note the fuzzy purple appearance of a mature serrated tussock plant in full seed.



A large infestation of mature serrated tussock plants in full seed in late spring.

**For more information go to [www.serratedtussock.com](http://www.serratedtussock.com)  
or call the Department of Primary Industries on 136 186.**

© Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party, January 2010.  
Updated November, 2014. Prepared by Chelsea Wardrope.

### Disclaimer

This publication may be of assistance to you but the Victorian Serrated Tussock Working Party and its employees do not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind or is wholly appropriate for your particular purposes and therefore disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence which may arise from you relying on any information in this publication.

