

## ***Stipa tenuissima*: unwanted weedy grass on the move!**

P.J. de Lange and R.O. Gardner

Gardner et al. (1996) identified and recorded the unwelcome presence of *S. tenuissima* as a casual weed in the South Auckland area. At that time the species was definitely known from the wild at only a single site (cf. Ford 1994, Connor & Ford 1997), the grounds of the University of Waikato, where spontaneous seedlings (AK 221059) had arisen in the vicinity of a garden planting of *S. tenuissima*.

Unfortunately despite written requests and meetings with that Universities ground staff and interested academia, no serious attempt has been made by the University of Waikato to control the infestation, and consequently *S. tenuissima* has made a good job of it moving across a small access road and through a fence on to the adjoining property of St. Johns College, where it is now patchily distributed. On the campus side the *Stipa* has also made considerable progress and is now found scattered over some several hundred metres of garden and foot path.

In January 1997 one of us (PdeL) discovered two more adventive infestations; one within the main car park of the Hamilton Botanic Gardens (AK 231881 vouchered in March 1997), and the other within building rubble behind a car sales yard, Angelsea Street, Hamilton (AK 231880 vouchered in March 1997). While the first of these sites is relatively contained and obviously had its origins from deliberately planted specimens, the second site is puzzling because the grass is not known from nearby plantings. May be it arose through the careless disposal of garden refuse, a not altogether uncommon mode of establishment for weeds within Hamilton City (let alone elsewhere).

Later in March of the same year one of us (PdeL) collected seedlings and an adult plant from the railway yards, Huntly (AK 231879). Again no obvious plantings were in the vicinity and one presumes that this site too originated through the thoughtless disposal of garden waste. Even more disturbing, outside the Waikato, within the Auckland area, ROG recently (March 1997) identified a specimen of *S. tenuissima* discovered by a noxious weed inspector wild within a nursery in the Pukekohe area. Testimony we guess to the comments made that well known Pukekohe nursery man and importer of unusual plants Terry Hatch (pers. comm., 1996) of this species "I was given some of your grass [*sic*] (*Stipa tenuissima*) by some bloke who thought it looked pretty, I tried a bit and found it particularly invasive, unfortunately by which stage I had already given some to several keen, local gardeners, whom I suspect will have passed it on to other gardeners.....I guess it will not be too long before it will be well established in the garden circle, and from there it won't be too long before we find it wild". To Terry's credit he destroyed all his stock and has been advocating the destruction of this species to any whom grow it. Unfortunately Terry's example is not being followed, and we were rather disappointed that that famous gardening doyen Kerry Carmen, in a seemingly innocent article on the virtues of *Crocus*, depicts "Autumn crocuses smiling up through a veil of ornamental grass (*Crocus serotinus* subsp. *salzmanii* and the dwarf ornamental grass *Stipa tenuissima*)" (*Listener*, 26 April 1997, page 38).

So it is obvious that the spread of this species is **still** being assisted by New Zealand nurseries, garden centres and perhaps gardening circles, despite the publications and warnings against this practice (Ford 1994, Gardner et al. 1996, Connor & Ford 1997). This is a great pity because this carelessness, together with that of individuals too lazy to properly dispose of their garden waste will inevitably increase the rate by which this aggressive grass spreads throughout the country.

### **Acknowledgments**

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## References

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## **Senecio esleri straggles into Hamilton City!**

P.J. de Lange

In 1995 I drew attention to the fact that the adventive *Senecio esleri* had been collected from Huntly during 1993 (de Lange 1995), thus extending its distribution a considerable distance south of where it had previously been reported by Webb (1989). In that same article I wondered when this weedy fireweed would show up any further south.

During February 1997 I discovered a single flowering plant growing amongst other assorted weeds on an untidy roadside kerb, Te Rapa Straight, Hamilton (AK 231042). Although no other specimens were seen in the area (nor do others exist in WAIK!), I strongly suspect that my random sample is indicative of this fireweed's further spread into the greater Waikato, rather than an isolated dispersal event. So I am keeping a look out for further occurrences to map the pattern of establishment.

On this point it is interesting to observe that the establishment pattern exhibited by *S. esleri* has apparently not followed the trend set by other "adventive fireweeds" (Drury 1974; de Lange 1990, 1995) whereby colonisation of the Hauraki Plains and Coromandel Peninsula has preceded the taxon's spread into Hamilton Basin (*sensu* McCraw 1967).

So unusual is this pattern that I suspect it is anomalous. Has anyone seen *Senecio esleri* in the Coromandel region? It must be there by now.

## References

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