

**POA DIPSACEA IN THE MT OLYMPUS VALLEY****Joan E. Vickers**

Although *Poa dipsacea* is not rare, local sightings of this subalpine-alpine grass are not often reported. Here I describe how to recognise it, if you see it in the field, and where a *P. dipsacea* grassland may be seen.

There is a *P. dipsacea* grassland on east-facing slopes of Mt Olympus Skifield Valley (1333m) that is large enough to distinguish as a unit on an aerial photograph. Morphologically *P. dipsacea* is very similar to *P. pratensis* (Kentucky blue grass), (Edgar, 1986), but its larger spikelets and long anthers droop characteristically. This feature and the bright green underside and bluish-green upper side of the leaf make it easy to identify in the field. A *P. dipsacea* grassland looks like a flash of bright green in the distance. David Norton and I found a smaller *P. dipsacea* patch near the access tow on the skifield, which shared a number of associated species with the large grassland. *P. dipsacea* occurs mainly in Marlborough and Canterbury, and rarely in western Nelson (Edgar, 1986).

Another good find was *Agropyron enysii*, growing occasionally on the borders of the large *Poa dipsacea* grassland. It is a larger grass than the latter and in this valley has a reddish-green tint to its leaves. *Agropyron enysii* occurs in sub- and low-alpine grassland of mid-Canterbury (Mark and Adams, 1986). My thanks to Elizabeth Edgar for identifying *Poa dipsacea* and to Colin Meurk for identifying *Agropyron enysii*.

**References**

- Edgar, E. 1986 *Poa* L. in New Zealand, *New Zealand Journal of Botany*. 24, 425-503.
- Mark, A.F. & Adams, N.M. 1986 *New Zealand Alpine Plants*. Reed, Wellington.