

# Eleocharis gracilis

## COMMON NAME

slender spike sedge

## SYNONYMS

*Eleocharis gracilis* R.Br. var. *gracillima* Hook.f.; *Eleocharis gracilis* R.Br. var. *radicans* Hook.f.; *Eleocharis cunninghamii* Boeck.; *Eleocharis gracillima* (Hook.f.) Hook.f.; *Eleocharis hookeri* Boeck.

## FAMILY

Cyperaceae

## AUTHORITY

*Eleocharis gracilis* R.Br.

## FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

## ENDEMIC TAXON

No

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Sedges

## NVS CODE

ELEGRA

## CHROMOSOME NUMBER

$2n = 20$

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

## DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. In New Zealand present in the North Island, South Island, Chatham Islands and Stewart Island/Rakiura. Present in Australia and Norfolk Island.

## HABITAT

Coastal to subalpine. A species of usually open situations on permanently damp ground such as lake, pond, tarn, stream and river sides, and wetlands.

## WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

OBL: Obligate Wetland

Almost always is a hydrophyte, rarely in uplands (non-wetlands).



Coromandel, January. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Waikuku Beach. Photographer: Gillian M. Crowcroft, Licence: All rights reserved.

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Terrestrial or semi-aquatic sedge forming green to red-green tufts. **Rhizomes** widely creeping, 1–3 mm diameter, loosely ensheathed at each nodes by conspicuous dark maroon, obtuse bracts with broad membranous margins. **Culms** densely tufted to widely spaced (or set close together in a linear series), 20–400 × 0.5 mm, erect or curved; sheaths membranous, with maroon to purple markings and an oblique orifice. **Spikelets** conspicuous, 3–8 × 1–4 mm, 5–20-flowered, ovoid to almost lanceolate, subacute. **Glumes** oblong, obtuse, 1-nerved, membranous, margins often very broad. **Hypogynous bristles** 4–8, usually > nut. **Stamens** 3. **Style** 3-fid. **Nut** slightly < 1.5 mm long, slightly < 1 mm diameter, trigonous, obovoid, light to dark brown, smooth, surmounted by the pyramidal, persistent style-base.

## SIMILAR TAXA

Most likely to be confused with *Eleocharis pusilla* R.Br. from which it differs by widely creeping rather than ascending rhizome; by the spikelets > 3 mm long (rather than 2.5–3 mm long); hypogynous bristles 4–8 (rather than absent or occasionally 2–3); and by the smooth nut (rather than nut with the surface covered in prominent vertical ribs and fine transverse bars). *Eleocharis gracilis* and *E. pusilla* may at times be sympatric.

## FLOWERING

August–January

## FRUITING

October–May

## LIFE CYCLE

Bristly nuts are dispersed by water and possibly wind and attachment (Thorsen et al., 2009).

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from fresh seed and rooted pieces. Prefers a permanently damp situation in full sun.

## ETYMOLOGY

**eleocharis**: Charm of the swamp

**gracilis**: Slender

## ATTRIBUTION

Description adapted from Moore and Edgar (1970)

## REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Moore LB, Edgar E. 1970. Flora of New Zealand, Volume II. Indigenous Tracheophyta: Monocotyledones except Gramineae. Government Printer, Wellington, NZ. 354 p.

Thorsen MJ, Dickinson KJM, Seddon PJ. 2009. Seed dispersal systems in the New Zealand flora. *Perspectives in Plant Ecology, Evolution and Systematics* 11: 285–309.

## MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/eleocharis-gracilis/>