

# Isolepis prolifera

## SYNONYMS

Schoenoplectus prolifer (Rottb.) Palla; Scirpus prolifer Rottb.; Cyperus punctatus Lam., Isolepis erythronema Steud.; Isolepis globosa Buchanan;

## FAMILY

Cyperaceae

## AUTHORITY

Isolepis prolifera (Rottb.) R.Br.

## FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

## ENDEMIC TAXON

No

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Sedges

## NVS CODE

ISOPRO

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

## DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. New Zealand: North, South and Chatham Islands. Also Australia, South Africa.

## HABITAT

Coastal to lower montane. Mostly in open, freshwater wetland systems—eutrophic or oligotrophic. Sometimes an aggressive weed in farm dams. Often invading poorly drained pasture and old cattle troughs. It is highly palatable to livestock which often wade out into wetlands seeking it.

## WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

OBL: Obligate Wetland

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

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

**Culms** 60–900 mm × 0.7–4.0 mm, in tufts, ± compressed, lax and soft, or narrower, terete and erect, leafless, bearing a single reddish basal sheath with dilated oblique orifice. **Inflorescence** an apparently lateral cluster of numerous spikelets, often proliferous with 1–4–(10) branchlets, 20–70 mm long, each sheathed at the base and bearing a further small head of spikelets; bract subtending inflorescence obtuse, < spikelets. **Spikelets** 2–10 × 1–2 mm, narrow-linear, cylindrical, green to light red-brown. **Glumes** 2.0–2.5 × c.1.0 mm, ovate- to oblong-lanceolate, subacute to very shortly apiculate, membranous, flecked with small, light red-brown striae, margins entire and keel pale brown or green, lateral nerves conspicuous. **Hypogynous bristles** 0. **Stamens** 3. **Style-branches** 3. **Nut** c. 1.0 × 0.5 mm, c. ½ length of glume, trigonous, sides convex between the slightly thickened angles, minutely apiculate and stipitate, creamy yellow, surface minutely reticulate.



Duck creek, Pauanui, February. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Duck creek, Pauanui, February. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

### SIMILAR TAXA

Similar to *Isolepis inundata* R.Br. and *I. distigmata* (C.B.Clarke) Edgar. It is distinguished from these species by its usually hyaline yellow-green glumes flecked with minute red-brown stripes, and complete absence of leaves. From *I. distigmata* it also differs by the 3 rather than 2 style-branches, and trigonous nuts, and from *I. inundatus* differs by the shorter, broader spikelets and 1–(2) instead of 3 stamens. Most forms of *I. inundatus* have at least some true leaves, *I. prolifera* is always leafless.

### FLOWERING

October–January

### FRUITING

December–April

### LIFE CYCLE

Nuts are dispersed by water and possibly granivory and attachment (Thorsen et al., 2009).

### PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from fresh seed and by division of whole plants. Once established rather tolerant of a range of conditions but flourishes best in full sun in a permanently damp soil. An attractive pot plant but can become invasive in some situations.

### ETYMOLOGY

**isolepis:** From the Greek isos (equal) and lepis (scale)

### ATTRIBUTION

Description adapted from Moore and Edgar (1970).

### REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Johnson AT, Smith HA. 1986. *Plant Names Simplified: Their pronunciation, derivation and meaning*. Landsman Bookshop Ltd, Buckenhill, UK.

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/isolepis-prolifera/>