

# Lepidosperma laterale

## COMMON NAME

sword sedge

## SYNONYMS

None

## FAMILY

Cyperaceae

## AUTHORITY

Lepidosperma laterale R.Br.

## FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

## ENDEMIC TAXON

No

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Sedges

## NVS CODE

LEPLAT

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

## DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. Australian and New Zealand. In New Zealand confined to the North Island where it common from Te Pahi south to about the King Country and the Bay of Plenty.

## HABITAT

Coastal to lowland, where it usually grows on poorly drained clay soils in gumland scrub, in regenerating forest on steep hill slopes. Sometimes in damp sand such in dune swales and slacks or on sand podzols. Often grows in shrublands dominated by *Kunzea* Rchb. and *Leptospermum* J.R.Forst. et G.Forst..

## WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACU: Facultative Upland

Occasionally is a hydrophyte but usually occurs in uplands (non-wetlands).



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



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

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Coarsely tufted perennial sedge arising from a stout woody rootstock. **Culms** 0.5–2.0 m tall, 4–7 mm wide, rigidly coriaceous, laterally flattened with sharp, minutely scabrid margins to more or less convex above. **Leaves** 3–5 mm wide, similar to culms but usually much shorter, equitant at the base, margins extremely minutely scabrid, apices acuminate. **Panicle** 100–400 mm long, greyish brown when mature, rather narrow, rigidly erect; branches mostly distant, usually simple, erect; lowest bract with a stiff lamina 20–60 mm long, upper bracts shorter, distinctly mucronate, brown to grey-brown. **Spikelets** 6 mm long, distant on the lower branches, fascicled above, 1–4-flowered, only the uppermost flower fertile. **Glumes** 5–7, ovate, acuminate, pubescent towards the apex, the lowest 2–3 empty. **Hypogynous scales** 6, fused at base, each terminated by a fine ciliate seta, this up to ½ length of nut. **Nut** 2.5–3.5 × 1.5–2.0 mm, ovoid, more or less trigonous, the angles thickened, surface at first wrinkled, becoming smooth at maturity, brown; persistent style-base hardly distinguishable from nut, glabrous, brown, with a small black mucro.

## SIMILAR TAXA

Could be confused with *Machaerina complanata* (Bergg.) Koyama and *Machaerina sinclairii* (Hook.f.) Koyama, and other sedges that have large, flat culms and leaves. However both these species have much wider culms or leaves (up to 30 mm in *Machaerina*) and denser flowered, usually pendulous, often distinctly fluffy inflorescences, and mostly grow in permanently damp situations (such as seepages) or in peat bogs.

## FLOWERING

September–December

## FRUITING

October–March (long persistent, usually present all year round)

## LIFE CYCLE

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

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Difficult to cultivate. Seed difficult to germinate. Plants resent root disturbance and usually die if transplanted. However, considerable success has been achieved growing plants and germinating seed in untreated saw dust. Nevertheless this is an attractive species to grown in a sunny situation, preferring poorly drained clay soils.

## ETYMOLOGY

**lepidosperma**: Scale seed

## WHERE TO BUY

Plants are occasionally available from specialist nurseries.

## 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/lepidosperma-laterale/>