

Machaerina juncea

COMMON NAME

sedge, tussock swamp twig rush

SYNONYMS

Cladium junceum R.Br.; *Lepidosperma colensoi* Boeck.; *Baumea juncea* (R.Br.) Palla

FAMILY

Cyperaceae

AUTHORITY

Machaerina juncea (R.Br.) Koyama

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

No

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Sedges

NVS CODE

MACJUN

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. New Zealand: Three Kings, North and South Islands but scarce south of the Bay of Plenty and Waikato, and very uncommon in the South Island where it known mostly from Nelson, Marlborough and North Westland, though it extends south into Otago.

HABITAT

Coastal to lower montane. Locally common in damp sites in gum land, swamps, salt marshes, and also along lake margins and river estuaries.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACW: Facultative Wetland

Usually is a hydrophyte but occasionally found in uplands (non-wetlands).



Whangapoua harbour, October. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Sickle-shaped tip of bract. Waikumete, Auckland. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 22/10/2007, Licence: CC BY.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Tufted, rush-like, rhizomatous perennial. **Rhizome** 3–10 mm diameter, woody, usually shortly creeping, sometimes greatly elongated, covered with loose, papery, imbricate, light brown bracts. **Culms** 0.2–1.35 tall, 1.0–3.5 mm wide, arising in mostly short-spaced (crowded) tufts along rhizome, terete, rigid, erect, smooth, glaucous to glaucescent, with 1–2 distant nodes. **Leaves** all reduced to light brown or reddish sheathing bracts, the lowermost smaller, mucronate, the upper 1–3 longer, distant along the culm, usually dark brown at the orifice, with a small, sickle-shaped, laterally flattened mucro-like lamina up to 5 mm long. **Inflorescence** 25–100 mm long, stiff, erect, spike-like, sparingly branched, subtended by a much shorter sheathing bract. **Spikelets** not fascicled, 4–5 mm long, red-brown, 1–2-flowered, only the lowest flowers fertile. **Glumes** 4–5, oblong-lanceolate, acute, membranous, streaked with brown, scabrid on the keel and towards the tip. **Nut** 2.5–3.0 × c. 1.5 mm, oblong-ovoid, obscurely trigonous, dark brown to black, orange near the base, surface pitted, surmounted by the small, tumid, pubescent style-base.

SIMILAR TAXA

Easily distinguished from other New Zealand species of *Machaerina* by the leaves which are reduced to sheathing bracts and from *M. tenax* by the uppermost sheathing bracts distant along culm (rather than clustered at the stem base), each surmounted by a short, falcate lamina and also by the glumes not spreading (rather than spreading in *M. tenax*) as the fruit matures. *Machaerina juncea* is superficially similar to *Apodasmia similis* with which it often grows, and from which it is distinguished by the grey-green, red-green to orange-yellow stems bearing regularly spaced bract-like, sheathing dark brown or maroon-black leaves, and by the terminal, many-flowered, paniculate to fascicled male and female spikelets.

FLOWERING

October–December

FRUITING

Fruits may be found throughout the year

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from rooted pieces and fresh seed. Rooted pieces establish best if first healed in within a potting medium of mostly untreated saw dust. Once established remarkably tolerant of drought. Does best when planted in full sun, in a permanently damp soil. *Machaerina juncea* is not fussy about soil fertility but does best in a slightly acidic soil. It is also tolerant of saline conditions and can be planted into salt marshes and along estuarine creeks and lagoons.

ETYMOLOGY

juncea: Rush-like

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (16 February 2012). Description adapted from Moore & 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.

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/machaerina-juncea/>