

Morelotia affinis

COMMON NAME

morelotia

SYNONYMS

Lampocarya affinis Brong.; Morelotia gahniaeformis Gaud. var. minor A.Rich.; Gahnia arenaria Hook.f.; Mariscus affinis (Brong.) Kuntze; Machaerina affinis (Brong.) Kern

FAMILY

Cyperaceae

AUTHORITY

Morelotia affinis (Brong.) Blake

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Sedges

NVS CODE

MORAFF

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 46

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Not Threatened

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. North Island, South Island from Te Pahi south to south-west Nelson.

HABITAT

Coastal to montane. usually on steep clay banks and hillsides in gumland scrub, shrublands and other regenerating mainly indigenous vegetation. Sometimes in pine plantations. Also colonising steep rock faces, gorges and boulder falls.



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



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

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Harsh, leafy tufted perennial sedge 200–700 mm tall. **Rootstock**, stout, lignaceous. **Leaves** numerous, » culms, 200–620 × 4–8 mm, green to yellow-green (rarely dark green), flat, curving, scabrid on the abaxial, tapering to a filiform apex, this usually curled when dry; margins scabrid, strongly revolute in the long persistent dry old leaves; sheath rather short compared to lamina, not demarcated from lamina by any transverse line but merely becoming broader, cream, with membranous margins. **Panicle** erect, rigid, 60–300 mm long, with short, more or less distant branchlets subtended by rigid, scabrid, leaf-like bracts. **Spikelets** 6.5–10.0 mm long, narrow-lanceolate, shortly stalked. **Glumes** coriaceous, minutely puberulous, keel and margins finely scabrid; 4 outer glumes smaller, increasing in size, usually acuminate, 2 upper glumes much longer, acute, rigid; a seventh minute membranous glume subtending the uppermost sterile flower. **Nut** 2.5–3.0 × 1.5 mm, elliptic-oblong, lustrous red-brown to black, with 3 longitudinal ribs, surmounted by a thickened, corky style-base which is very distinct in the immature fruit; ripe fruit retained on plant for a time by being entangled in the slightly elongated staminal filaments.

SIMILAR TAXA

Rather close to *Gahnia* J.R.Forst. et G.Forst. from which it is best distinguished by the smaller stature and by the distichous arrangement of the glumes. Some botanists regard *Morelotia* as indistinguishable from *Gahnia*, treating the New Zealand plant as *Gahnia affinis* (Brong.) Steud.

FLOWERING

October–December

FRUITING

November–April (but old inflorescences present throughout the year)

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Very difficult to cultivate. The seed is difficult to germinate and plants resent root disturbance, so usually die if transplanted. However, considerable success has been achieved growing plants and germinating seed in untreated saw dust. Although tricky this is a species worth persevering with, as it has an attractive form and once established is very drought resistant. It does best in full sun on rock or planted within a poorly drained clay soils.

ETYMOLOGY

affinis: From the Latin ad + finis 'to the boundary', means 'neighbouring', 'allied to', 'akin to'

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.

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/morelotia-affinis/>