

# Scirpus polystachyus

## SYNONYMS

None

## FAMILY

Cyperaceae

## AUTHORITY

*Scirpus polystachyus* F.Muell.

## FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

## ENDEMIC TAXON

No

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Sedges

## CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 60

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Non-resident Native – Coloniser | Qualifiers: DP, SO

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Non-resident Native – Coloniser | Qualifiers: SO

2009 | Non-resident Native – Coloniser | Qualifiers: SO

2004 | Non-resident Native – Coloniser

## DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. In New Zealand known only on the West Coast of the South Island, mainly in wetland south of Hokitika to about Okarito. Its range is still expanding. Common in Australia.

## HABITAT

Coastal to low lying fertile to moderately acidic open wetlands, lake, pond and slow flowing stream margins. Usually in well lighted places, often with its basalt stems and rhizomes immersed in water.

## WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACW: Facultative Wetland

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



Herbarium specimen AK 282672. Photographer: Peter J. de Lange, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Herbarium specimen AK 282672, detail. Photographer: Peter J. de Lange, Licence: CC

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Semi-aquatic to terrestrial summer green sedge forming robust leafy clumps up to 1.8 m tall. **Stems** more or less triquetrous, basally very leafy, with 3–5–(8) evenly spaced, cauline leaves. **Leaves** numerous, much < stems, 0.4–0.8 m × 5–8 mm, basally channelled but becoming flattened in upper half, strongly keeled, margins and keel finely scabrid; sheaths light reddish-brown, lustrous. **Inflorescence** a terminal compound, irregular, fan-shaped, umbel bearing many unequal erect rays; secondary rays slender, more or less drooping at maturity; leaf-like bracts c. 3, > inflorescence, upper bracts dark brown, strongly nerved. **Spikelets** more or less 4 mm long, ovate, in clusters of 2–5 at tips of rays. **Glumes** more or less 1.5 mm long, light brown to live, membranous, much darker towards apex, midrib thickened, not excurrent. **Hypogynous bristles** many, filiform, much > nut, folded, twisted or spiralled, very conspicuous at maturity. **Stamens** 3. **Stigmas** 3. **Nut** more or less 0.7 mm long, more or less trigonous but dorsal angle not well marked, cream.

## SIMILAR TAXA

None. However, in its vegetative state it can be confused with *Bolboschoenus* spp. which differ by their bulbous root stock, distinctly triquetrous stems, and by the leaves evenly spaced from the stem base to the inflorescence. Flowering material is very different as *Scirpus polystachyus* has a distinctive, densely and many flowered, fan-shaped umbel, those of *Bolboschoenus* either lack rays or have up to 3 short rays bearing up to 4 spikelets, subtending by a sessile mass of 3–4 spikelets.

## FLOWERING

September–February

## FRUITING

December–June

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Grows easily from fresh seed and rooted pieces. Has some potential as a pond ornamental. Requires full sun to flourish

## THREATS

Not apparent threats but very localised in its distribution. Because the first gatherings were made from near plantation forestry this species has been regarded as a weed introduced from Australia (Healy & Edgar 1980). The alternative, that it naturally arrived here by wind or avian dispersal was not considered at the time. This species has seeds suited to bird dispersal and it is not associated with plantation forestry in Australia. Its distribution in New Zealand overlaps with that of grey teal which feed in areas it frequents and are known to move between countries, so are a suitable seed vector. Therefore de Lange et al. (2009) treated it as a successful trans-Tasman colonist that while still uncommon is now actively spreading.

## WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available

## ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (30 August 2005). Description adapted from Healy & Edgar (1980) supplemented with details obtained from fresh plants and herbarium material by P.J. de Lange.

## REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

de Lange PJ, Norton DA, Courtney SP, Heenan PB, Barkla JW, Cameron EK, Hitchmough RA, Townsend AJ. 2009. Threatened and uncommon plants of New Zealand (2008 revision). *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 47(1): 61–96. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00288250909509794>.  
Healy AJ, Edgar E. 1980. Flora of New Zealand, Volume III. Adventive Cyperaceous, Petalous and Spathaceous Monocotyledons. Government Printer, Wellington, NZ. 220 p.

### **NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION**

Please cite as: de Lange, P.J. (Year at time of access): *Scirpus polystachyus* Fact Sheet (content continuously updated). New Zealand Plant Conservation Network. <https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/scirpus-polystachyus/> (Date website was queried)

### **MORE INFORMATION**

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/scirpus-polystachyus/>