

Juncus usitatus

SYNONYMS

Agathryon usitatum (L.A.S. Johnson) Záveská Drábková & Pročková

FAMILY

Juncaceae

AUTHORITY

Juncus usitatus L.A.S.Johnson

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

No

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Rushes & Allied Plants

NVS CODE

JUNUSI

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. Kermadec, North, South, and Chatham Islands. Mainly northern but extending to about Canterbury. Also in Australia, Norfolk Island and New Caledonia.

HABITAT

Coastal to lowland. Often on offshore islands. Usually in open ground or shrubland, more rarely under tall forest. Evidently preferring seasonally dry clay soils or growing amongst rock. Preferring sunny situations. A common urban weed in Auckland City, where it often grows on exposures of basalt lava.

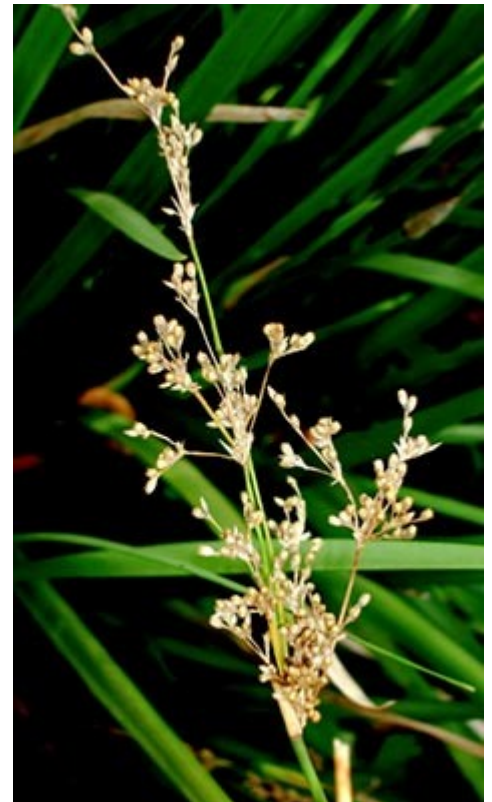
WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACW: Facultative Wetland

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



Islington Bay 12 April 2006. Photographer: Mike Wilcox, Licence: All rights reserved.



Close up of Inflorescence, MOTAT 1 Grounds (wild plant), March 2007. Photographer: Peter J. de Lange, Licence: CC BY-NC.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Densely tufted, clump-forming, erect, slender, wiry, bright green to dark green perennial herb. **Rhizome** 2–3 mm diameter, horizontal. **Flowering stems** 0.5–1.2 m tall, 1–1.5 mm diameter, slender, finely ridged, not shining, light yellow-green, bright green to dark green, pith interrupted by numerous, irregular shaped lacunae or continuous. **Leaves** absent. **Basal bracts** short, closely appressed to the stem, lower bracts light grey, the upper bracts light brown, paler towards the apices. **Inflorescence** lateral, many-flowered, open and spreading, branchlets slender, curved, never clustered. **Flowers** 1.5–2.0 mm long, evenly spaced along inflorescence branchlets; tepals up to 2 mm long, initially pale green with very broad membranous margin, drying straw-yellow or pale brown. **Stamens** 3. **Capsule** 1.5–2 mm long, more or less equal, equal or slightly greater than tepals, trigonous-spherical to almost globose, shining, pale straw-coloured or light brown.

SIMILAR TAXA

The thin, wiry, usually bright-green stems, and widely and evenly spaced flower/capsules on long spreading branchlets are diagnostic for this species. It could only be confused with the introduced *J. subsecundus* N.A.Wakef. which differs by the blue-green stems and capsules which are consistently > 2 (rather than < 2) mm long.

FLOWERING

October–April

FLOWER COLOURS

Green, Yellow

FRUITING

October–September

LIFE CYCLE

Mucilaginous seeds are dispersed by attachment, wind and water (Thorsen et al., 2009).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easy from fresh seed and by the division of whole plants. Can be invasive. Ideal for a sunny, seasonally damp clay soil.

ETYMOLOGY

juncus: From the Latin *jungere* ‘to tie or bind’, the stems of some species being used to make cord (Johnson and Smith)

WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available

TAXONOMIC NOTES

Pročków et al. (2023) proposed a taxonomic segregation of *Juncus* into six genera based on molecular and morphological evidence. Whilst it has long been recognised that the current circumscription of *Juncus* includes morphologically divergent taxa—reflected in the recognition of numerous subgenera and sections—the consensus view of the NZPCN website taxonomy subcommittee, taking into consideration advice from Australian *Juncus* expert Dr Karen Wilson (NSW Herbarium) and others in Europe is that the generic segregations proposed need further consideration and testing. Accordingly, it has been decided to maintain the current broad circumscription of *Juncus*, but to include all new names as synonyms in factsheets. We thank, in particular, Dr Wilson for her helpful comments.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (1 September 2006). Description based on Moore & Edgar (1970).

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

- Johnson, A. T. and Smith, H. A. 1986. Plant Names Simplified: Their pronunciation, derivation and meaning. Landsman Bookshop Ltd, Buckenhill, UK.
- Moore, L.B.; Edgar, E. 1970. Flora of New Zealand. Vol. II, Wellington, Government Printer.
- Pročków, J., Záveská Drábková, L. 2023. A revision of the Juncaceae with delimitation of six new genera: nomenclatural changes in *Juncus*. *Phytotaxa* 622(1): 17–41.
- Thorsen, M. J.; Dickinson, K. J. M.; Seddon, P. J. 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/juncus-usitatus/>