

Cyperus congestus

COMMON NAME

purple umbrella sedge

FAMILY

Cyperaceae

AUTHORITY

Cyperus congestus M. Vahl

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Exotic

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Sedges

NVS CODE

CYPCON

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Tufted leafy sedge, with triangular stems with a swollen base, up to 80 cm tall, leaves arranged in threes, with a single or group of up to 7 red-purple round flowerheads, each made up of narrow flattened flower spikes, with 3 to 6 long grass-like leaves immediately under this, at the end of flower stalk.

DISTRIBUTION

Scattered throughout the North Island and Nelson, Marlborough and Canterbury, locally common in many areas.

HABITAT

Wet areas such as the banks of rivers and streams, swamps, ditches and also a weed of drier sites such as roadsides and cropping land.

FEATURES

Thickly tufted perennial. Stems 15-40- (80) cm high, rather robust, 3-angled, smooth, leafy and somewhat bulbous and woody at base. Leaves usually < stems, to 7 mm wide, flat, margins smooth below, scabrid towards tip; sheaths purple-brown, minute transverse septa evident. Involucral bracts 3-6, leaf-like, the lowest > inflorescence. Inflorescence a simple or compound umbel or reduced to a single head; rays 2-4, rather rigid, to 6 cm long. Spikelets numerous, 10-20 × 2 mm, narrow-linear, acute, in dense ovate or hemispherical reddish-purple spikes; rhachilla with membranous wings. Glumes ± 3 mm long, not closely imbricate, usually tightly appressed to rhachilla, oblong-elliptic, acute, many-nerved, keel green, margins deep red-purple. Stamens 3. Style-branches 3. Nut ± ½ length of glume, obovoid-oblong, trigonous, dark brown, apiculate.

SIMILAR TAXA

Similar to other *Cyperus* species, distinguished from the only other species with red-purple flowers (*C. rotundus*) by the lack of rhizomes and tubers and much taller growth habit.

FLOWERING

Summer to autumn

FLOWER COLOURS

Green, Red/Pink

FRUITING

Summer to autumn



Cyperus congestus. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth



Cyperus congestus. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth

LIFE CYCLE

Seed dispersed by contaminated machinery.

YEAR NATURALISED

1878

ORIGIN

South Africa

REASON FOR INTRODUCTION

Unknown, possibly ornamental plant, seed or soil contaminant.

CONTROL TECHNIQUES

Can be controlled manually, mechanically or herbicidally depending on situation.

ETYMOLOGY

cyperus: From the ancient Greek name for sedge, kypeiros

ATTRIBUTION

Factsheet prepared by Paul Champion and Deborah Hofstra (NIWA).

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Healy, A.J.; Edgar, E. (1980). Flora of New Zealand, Volume III. Adventive Cyperaceous, Petalous and Spathaceous Monocotyledons. Government Printer, Wellington. 220pp.

Champion et al (2012). Freshwater Pests of New Zealand. NIWA publication.

<http://www.niwa.co.nz/freshwater-and-estuaries/management-tools/identification-guides-and-fact-sheets/freshwater-pest-species>

Johnson PN, Brooke PA (1989). Wetland plants in New Zealand. DSIR Field Guide, DSIR Publishing, Wellington. 319pp.

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/cyperus-congestus/>