

Cyperus papyrus

COMMON NAME

Papyrus

FAMILY

Cyperaceae

AUTHORITY

Cyperus papyrus L.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Exotic

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Sedges

CONSERVATION STATUS

Not assessed

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Very tall (to 2.5 m) clump forming leafless reed-like plant with wide triangular stems several cm across, with many (often more than 100) drooping thread-like green flower branches at the top of each stem forming a mop-like structure.

DISTRIBUTION

Mostly northern North Island, usually close to habitation, but occasionally in remote sites.

HABITAT

Emergent in still and slow flowing water bodies.

FEATURES

Erect perennial sedge to 2.5 (4) m tall with triangular stems up to 4 cm across arising from short thick woody rhizomes. Leaves reduced to papery brown basal sheaths. Inflorescence terminal subtended by 4-10 deciduous sheath-like bracts 7-15 cm x 1 cm. Inflorescence compound often with >100 filamentous branches 10-25 cm x 1 mm, often sterile. Fertile spikes are 3-5 spikes with 20-30 spikelets, each 3-20 flowered. Viable seed production not known from New Zealand.

SIMILAR TAXA

Distinctive tall leafless sedge with mop-like flower heads, unlikely to be mistaken for other naturalised sedges.

FLOWERING

Summer

FLOWER COLOURS

Green

LIFE CYCLE

Perennial. Reproduces in New Zealand probably only by asexual spread through layering (seed is occasionally produced but it is not yet known if it is viable). Dispersed by deliberate planting or garden discards. However some occurrences are in very remote situations and are difficult to explain if they had originated from garden discards.

ORIGIN

Africa



Mature culms, 30 Dec 2006, Auckland Zoo.
Photographer: Peter de Lange



Inflorescence and involucral bracts. In cultivation, Auckland. Dec 2006. Photographer: Peter de Lange

REASON FOR INTRODUCTION

Ornamental plant

CONTROL TECHNIQUES

Not controlled in New Zealand.

TOLERANCES

Cold sensitive

ETYMOLOGY

cyperus: From the ancient Greek name for sedge, kypeiros

ATTRIBUTION

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

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Sainty, G.R.; Jacobs, S.W.L. (1981). Waterplants of New South Wales. Water Resources Commission NSW. 550pp.

MORE INFORMATION

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