Ficinia nodosa

COMMON NAMES
wiwi, knobby club rush, ethel sedge

BIOSTATUS
Native

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO
Jump to previous conservation statuses

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Sedges

FLOWER COLOURS
White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Rhizome short, 5–10 mm diameter, ascending to subhorizontal, woody, covered with red-brown bracts 5–10 mm long. **Culms** numerous, somewhat woody, 0.15–2.0 m, 1–2 mm diameter, yellow-green to bronze-green, densely packed on rhizome, rush-like, rigid and erect (sometimes in lush specimens with upper third curving over), terete or slightly compressed, finely striated when dry. **Leaves** reduced to 3–6 basal sheaths, the uppermost 50–130 mm long, brown or red-brown, the oblique orifice slightly dilated. **Inflorescence** an apparently lateral, solitary, hemispherical head, 7–15 mm wide, comprised of numerous, densely crowded, sessile spikelets; subtending bract continuous with the culm, rigid, erect, pungent, > inflorescence. **Spikelets** 3–4 mm long, ovoid, light brown. **Glumes** broadly ovate, obtuse, margins entire, more or less apiculate, reddish towards the tips, lateral nerves conspicuous. **Hypogynous bristles** 0. **Stamens** 3. **Style-branches** 3. **Nut** 1 mm long, < 1 mm wide, plano-convex to trigonous, apiculate, dark brown to almost black, shining.

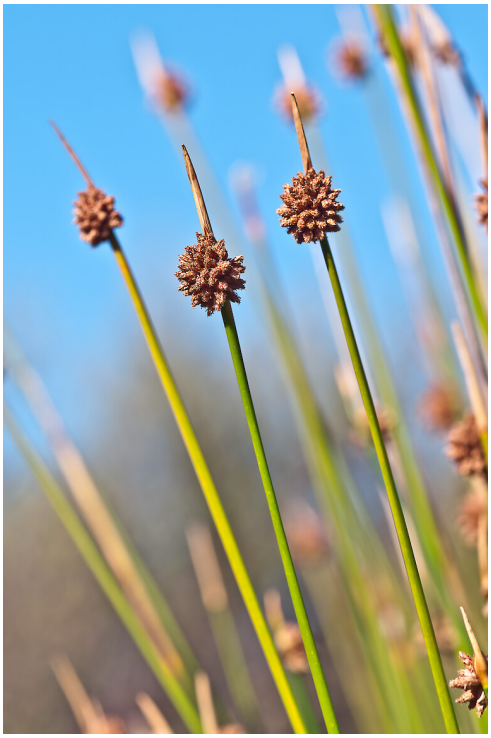
SIMILAR TAXA
Easily distinguished from *Isolepis* R.Br. by the larger overall size, stout, woody rhizomes, by the rigid and mostly erect somewhat woody culms, and by the presence of a gynophore.

DISTRIBUTION
Indigenous. Kermadec, Three Kings, North, South, Stewart and Chatham Islands. Widespread in the southern Hemisphere

HABITAT
Mostly coastal but occasional extending into montane area (up to 700 m a.s.l.). In a wide range of habitats but favouring open situations—commonly on sand, especially on sand dunes, sandy beaches and at the back of estuaries. Sometimes colonising sandstone, limestone of volcanic rock outcrops in lowland forest. Rarely in tussock grassland.

GENUS
Ficinia

FAMILY
Cyperaceae



Pauatahanui Inlet. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 25/02/2012, Licence: CC BY.

Flowering spikelet. Maungaraho Rock. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 11/05/2008, Licence: CC BY.

AUTHORITY
Ficinia nodosa (Rottb.) Goetgh., Muasya et D.A.Simpson

SYNONYMS
Scirpus nodosus Rottb., Isolepis nodosa (Rottb.) R.Br., Scirpoides nodosa (Rottb.) Sojak; Holoschoenus nodosus (Rottb.) Dietr.

ENDEMIC TAXON
No

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
September–December

FRUITING
November–May

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL
Nuts are possibly wind dispersed (Thorsen et al., 2009).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Easily grown from fresh seed and by the division of whole plants. Does best when planted in a free draining soil in a sunny site. Ideal in coastal sites but remarkably cold tolerant.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING
FACU: Facultative Upland
Occasionally is a hydrophyte but usually occurs in uplands (non-wetlands).

CULTIVATION
Occasionally available from specialist native plant nurseries.

EXTRA INFORMATION
Ficinia nodosa is naturalised around the New Zealand World War II, soldier graves at Suda Bay, Crete.

ETYMOLOGY
ficinia: Named after Heinrich David Auguste Ficinus, 19th century German botanist

NVS CODE
FICNOD

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 30

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2017 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO
2012 | Not Threatened
2009 | Not Threatened
2004 | Not Threatened
Jump to current conservation status

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Auckland: 2025 | Regionally Not Threatened | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT Help
The regional threat classification system leverages off the national assessments in the NZTCS, providing information relevant for the regional context. Auckland conservation status information is sourced from the "Conservation status of vascular plant species in Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland" Simpkins E et al. (2025) report.
Otago: 2025 | Regionally Not Threatened | Qualifiers: TL Help
The regional threat classification system leverages off the national assessments in the NZTCS, providing information relevant for the regional context. Otago conservation status information is sourced from the "Conservation Status of Indigenous Vascular Plants in Otago, 2025" Jarvie S et al. (2025) report.

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.
Thorsen MJ, Dickinson KJM, Seddon PJ. 2009. Seed dispersal systems in the New Zealand flora. *Perspectives in Plant Ecology, Evolution and Systematics 11*: 285–309.

ATTRIBUTION

Description adapted from Moore and Edgar (1970)

MORE INFORMATION

https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/ficinia-nodosa/

PDF DATE

06 June 2026