Gahnia lacera

COMMON NAMES
cutty grass

BIOSTATUS
Native – Endemic taxon

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

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Sedges

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Stout, bambusiform, perennial sedge forming dense, yellowish-green tufts. **Rhizome** shortly creeping, 5–8 mm diameter, very hard, lignaceous, long persistent when dead. **Culms** 0.6–2.0 m, 2–4 but up to 6 mm diameter at the base. **Leaves** numerous, almost all cauline and ≥ culms; lamina up to 380 mm long and 9 mm wide, yellow-green, green or dark green, flat or involute, glabrous, margins scabrid; sheaths all closely appressed to and enclosing base of culm, rugose above, maturing dark brown to almost black, smooth and glossy towards the node. **Panicle** 20–600 × 30–60 mm, rigid, usually erect, many-flowered, light brown with branchlets 20–160 mm long, usually in dense though more or less distant clusters along the axis of the panicle. **Spikelets** 1-flowered, 8 mm long, alternate on the branchlets, sessile or shortly stalked. **Glumes** 4–5; the outer 2–3 light red-brown; inner glumes pale cream, with a red lacerate apex. **Stamens** 4. **Style-branches** 3. **Nut** 3.5–4.5 mm long, slightly < 2 mm diameter, oblong-ellipsoid or oblong-obovoid, lustrous black, with a minute apiculate apex, endocarp obscurely transverse striate within.



Under open forest among limestone boulders; near Whanganui. Photographer: Colin C. Ogle, Date taken: 17/11/2018, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Fruits, Shelly Beach, Kaipara Harbour. Photographer: Colin C. Ogle, Date taken: 13/05/2016, Licence: CC BY-NC.

SIMILAR TAXA
Immediately distinguished from all other *Gahnia* species and *Morelotia affinis* (Brong.) Blake by the rhizomatous habit, and stout, bamboo-like culms.

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic. North Island from Te Paki south to about Awakino in the west and East Cape in the East.

HABITAT
Coastal to lowland (rarely extending up to 500 m a.s.l. in mountain ranges close to the sea). Colonising a variety of substrates which may be seasonally waterlogged thoughotherwise dry. Usually found in scrub or open forest.

GENUS
Gahnia

FAMILY
Cyperaceae

AUTHORITY
Gahnia lacera (A.Rich.) Steud.

SYNONYMS
Lampocarya lacera A.Rich.

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
July–November

FRUITING
Fruits may be present throughout the year

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

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Can be difficult to cultivate. The seed is difficult to germinate, and plants resent root disturbance and usually die if transplanted. However, considerable success has been achieved growing plants and/or germinating seed in untreated saw dust. Despite these problems this is an attractive species well worth attempting to grow. Once established it flourishes in a range of conditions but does best in full sun in a well drained or only seasonally wet soil.

ETYMOLOGY
gahnia: After Gahn

NVS CODE
GAHLAC

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2017 | Not Threatened
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.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING
Gardner RO. 1996. *Gahnia pauciflora* and *G. procera* and a note on *G. lacera*. *Auckland Botanical Society Journal 51*: 7–10.
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
Fact Sheet prepared by P.J. de Lange (30 October 2005). Description adapted from Moore and Edgar (1970)
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MORE INFORMATION
https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/gahnia-lacera/

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