

# Juncus acutus

## COMMON NAMES

sharp rush

## BIOSTATUS

Exotic

## CONSERVATION STATUS

Not applicable

## CATEGORY

Vascular

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Rushes & Allied Plants

## SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Upright spiny rush to 1 m tall, with tall cylindrical sharp tipped, stems and leaves forming dense stiff clumps, with clumped flowerheads near the end of each stem, made up of many red-brown to orange flowers/capsules (fruit).

## FLOWER COLOURS

Brown, Orange

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Very stout, forming dense prickly tufts; rhizomes stout, woody. **Stems** (40–)60–100 cm × 1.5–5 mm, very stiff and erect, smooth, light green. **Basal sheaths** shining dark red-brown. **Leaves** 1–2, basal, terete, similar to stem, with very pungent tip. **Inflorescence** large, compact 5–15 cm long. **Flowers** crowded. **Tepals** c. 3 mm long, ± equal, very hard, outer mucronate, inner truncate to emarginate with wide membranous margin at tip. **Stamens** 6. **Capsule** 4.5–5 mm long, much > tepals, ovoid, abruptly tapered, acute, reddish-brown to brownish-orange. **Seeds** with distinct tails.

## SIMILAR TAXA

No other rush has a combination of leaves similar to the stem, sharp pointed and large (> 4 mm) red-brown to orange capsules in a dense clustered head.

## DISTRIBUTION

Scattered, but locally abundant in Northland, Auckland, Manawatu and Wellington, mostly coastal.

## HABITAT

Wet and seasonally dry sandy areas

## GENUS

Juncus

## FAMILY

Juncaceae

## AUTHORITY

Juncus acutus L.

## TAXONOMIC NOTES

Subgenus Juncus, Section Juncus(Thalassii) Kirschner (2002: Juncaceae 2)



Manawatu Estuary. Aug 1989. Photographer: Colin C. Ogle, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Manawatu Estuary. Aug 1989. Photographer: Colin C. Ogle, Licence: CC BY-NC.

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## FLOWERING

Summer

## FRUITING

Autumn

## YEAR NATURALISED

1923

## ORIGIN

Europe, Africa, North and South America

## REASON FOR INTRODUCTION

Unknown, seed or soil contaminant.

## CONTROL TECHNIQUES

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

## LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

Perennial. Seed dispersed by animals, water or contaminated machinery.

## WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACW: Facultative Wetland

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

## ETYMOLOGY

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

## ENVIRONMENTAL WEED (2024)

**This plant is named in a list of 386 environmental weeds in New Zealand 2024 prepared by DOC.** 759 candidate species were considered for inclusion on this new comprehensive list of environmental weeds in New Zealand. The species considered were drawn from published lists of weed species, lists of plants that must be reported or managed by law if observed, existing national and regional programmes and agreements for pest management, and species already managed by the Department of Conservation (DOC). Candidate species were then assessed to see if they were fully naturalised and whether they have more than minor impacts in natural ecosystems. Read the full report [here](#).

## NVS CODE

JUNACS

## REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Champion, P. et al. 2020. Freshwater Invasive Species of New Zealand 2020. NIWA publication.

<https://docs.niwa.co.nz/library/public/FreInSpec.pdf>

Healy, A. J. 1982. Identification of weeds and clovers. New Zealand Weed and Pest Control Society Publication. Editorial Services Limited, Featherston. 299 p.

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

Johnson, A. T.; Smith, H. A. 1986. Plant Names Simplified: Their pronunciation, derivation and meaning. Landsman Bookshop Ltd, Buckenhill, UK.

Johnson, P. N.; Brooke, P. A. 1989. Wetland plants in New Zealand. DSIR Field Guide, DSIR Publishing, Wellington. 319 p.

Kirschner, J. (compiler) 2002. Juncaceae 2: *Juncus* subg. *Juncus*, Species Plantarum: Flora of the World Part 7: 1–336.

## **ATTRIBUTION**

Factsheet prepared by Paul Champion and Deborah Hofstra (NIWA). Features description from Healy and Edgar (1980).

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## **MORE INFORMATION**

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/juncus-acutus/>

## **PDF DATE**

08 June 2026