Juncus antarcticus

COMMON NAMES
dwarf rush

BIOSTATUS
Native – Endemic taxon

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

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Rushes & Allied Plants

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Bright green tufted perennial. **Stems** 20–120 mm long, 1 mm diameter at base, tapering above. **Leaves** numerous, all basal, equal to or < stems, bright green, 15–70 × 1 mm, lamina linear-subulate, solid, non-septate, canaliculate above, usually subterete to terete near the obtuse apex, otherwise flattened; sheath broad, without auricles. **Inflorescence** a single (rarely double), terminal 2–10-flowered, globose head, 3–10 mm wide, if double then the lower head is the smaller of the pair. **Flowers** c. 3 mm long; tepals more or less equal, usually dark brown to almost black, very rarely light brown. **Stamens** 3(–6). **Capsule** almost equal to tepals, ovoid to oblong, black, lustrous, especially toward the acute apex, mucro short and blunt-ended.

Arthurs Pass. Photographer: Melissa Hutchison, Date taken: 29/05/2020, Licence: CC BY-NC.

Salisbury Lodge, Kahurangi National Park. Photographer: Melissa Hutchison, Date taken: 18/01/2019, Licence: CC BY-NC.

SIMILAR TAXA
Mostly montane to alpine on the main islands of New Zealand this species is not easily confused with other indigenous or exotic *Juncus* spp. The small stature, and usually single, globose flower head places this species close to *J. dreganus* Kunth, *J. lomatophyllus* Spreng., *J. caespiticius* E. Meyer and *J. capitatus* Weigel, species from which it differs by the channelled leaves, except for *J. caespiticius* which is much larger and usually coastal and *J. capitatus* which differs by the usually reddish tepals 4–5 mm long, » capsules in length.

DISTRIBUTION
Indigenous. North Island (from the Central Volcanic Plateau south), South Island and Stewart Island/Rakiura, Chatham Islands, Auckland Islands and Campbell Island/Motu Ihupuku. Present in Australia.

HABITAT
A local species of wetlands, bogs mires and muddy ground. Primarily subalpine to alpine in the northern part of its range but descends to sea level around Otago, and on the Subantarctic Islands.

GENUS
Juncus

FAMILY
Juncaceae

AUTHORITY
Juncus antarcticus Hook.f.

SYNONYMS
Juncus pauciflorus Kirk; Juncus brevifolius Kirk; Australojuncus antarcticus (Hook.f.) Záveská Drábková & Proćków

TAXONOMIC NOTES
Proćków et al. (2023) proposed a taxonomic segregation of *Juncus* into six genera based on molecular and morphological evidence. Whilst it has long been recognised that the current circumscription of *Juncus* includes morphologically divergent taxa—reflected in the recognition of numerous subgenera and sections—the consensus view of the NZPCN website taxonomy subcommittee, taking into consideration advice from Australian *Juncus* expert Dr Karen Wilson (NSW Herbarium) and others in Europe is that the generic segregations proposed need further consideration and testing. Accordingly, it has been decided to maintain the current broad circumscription of *Juncus*, but to include all new names as synonyms in factsheets. We thank, in particular, Dr Wilson for her helpful comments.

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
October–January

FRUITING
October–May

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL
Mucilaginous seeds are dispersed by attachment, wind and water (Thorsen et al., 2009).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Easy in a pot but prefers a damp soil and dislikes humidity.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING
OBL: Obligate Wetland
Almost always is a hydrophyte, rarely 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)
antarcticus: Antarctic

NVS CODE
JUNANT

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
Otago: 2025 | Regionally Not Threatened 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

Johnson, A. T.; Smith, H. A. 1986. Plant Names Simplified: Their pronunciation, derivation and meaning. Landsman Bookshop Ltd, Buckenhill, UK.
Moore, L. B.; Edgar, E. 1970: *Flora of New Zealand. Vol. I*. Government Printer, Wellington.
Proćków, J., Záveská Drábková, L. 2023. A revision of the Juncaceae with delimitation of six new genera: nomenclatural changes in *Juncus*. *Phytotaxa 622(1)*: 17–41.
Thorsen, M. J.; Dickinson, K. J. M.; Seddon, P. J. 2009: Seed dispersal systems in the New Zealand flora. *Perspectives in Plant Ecology, Evolution and Systematics 11*: 285–309.

ATTRIBUTION

MORE INFORMATION

https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/juncus-antarcticus/

PDF DATE

25 May 2026