Juncus pallidus

COMMON NAMES
giant rush, leafless rush

BIOSTATUS
Native

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

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Rushes & Allied Plants

FLOWER COLOURS
Brown, Green

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Very robust, tall perennial forming dense patches up to 2 m tall. **Rhizome** 5–10 mm diameter, horizontal. **Flowering stems** 1–2 m tall, 3–8 mm diameter, erect, very rarely drooping, smooth, slightly glossy, light green or glaucous, soft, pith continuous. **Leaves** absent. **Basal sheathing bracts** numerous, lower ones shorter, upper ones larger, loosely sheathing, very obtuse with a long, hair-like mucro, light green, light brown or pinkish brown. **Inflorescence** apparently lateral, many-flowered, usually contracted into a dense head > 15 mm wide, or effuse with long stout, rigid branchlets. **Flowers** 2.3–3.0 mm long, clustered at branchlet apices, or evenly spaced along branchlets, on stout pedicels or almost sessile; tepals pale green, occasionally tinged with pink, maturing light brown, the outer rigid, the inner soft and membranous, almost colourless. **Stamens** 6. **Capsules** 2.8–3.6 mm long, usually distinctly > tepals, ovoid-trigonous, obtuse at the apex, very pale greenish brown.



Juncus pallidus. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Juncus pallidus. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

SIMILAR TAXA
Can be confused with *Juncus procerus* E.Meyer which is also an extremel;y robust species of similar habitats. However, *J. procerus* usually has dark green stems and the internal pith is interrupted not continuous. *Juncus pallidus* keys out with the very different looking *J. pauciflorus* R.Br. because both species have 6 stamens and their stems continuous, uninterrupted internal pith. *Juncus pauciflorus* is a very uncommon species with very slender, wiry, rather lax bright green stems, and finer, flexible ratehr than rigidly stout branchlets.

DISTRIBUTION
Indigenous. North, South, and Stewart Islands. Present in Australia and naturalised on Norfolk, Lord Howe and the Chatham Islands.

HABITAT
Coastal to lowland. Often in pastures where it can be as major weed. Usually in damp swampy hollows, on the margins of wetlands and lakes, in open shrubland on damp ground, or near saltmarshes in places that can be flooded by King tides.

GENUS
Juncus

FAMILY
Juncaceae

AUTHORITY
Juncus pallidus R.Br.

SYNONYMS
Juncus macrostigma Colenso
Agathryon pallidum (R.Br.) 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
No

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
October–January

FRUITING
November–May

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

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Easily grown from fresh seed and by the division of whole plants. An attractive, very robust species with beautiful blue-grey foliage. This species is sometimes a pasture weed.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING
FACW: Facultative Wetland
Usually is a hydrophyte but occasionally found in uplands (non-wetlands).

CULTIVATION
Occasionally available from retail plant and specialist native plant nurseries

ETYMOLOGY
juncus: From the Latin jungere ‘to tie or bind’, the stems of some species being used to make cord (Johnson and Smith)
pallidus: Pale

NVS CODE
JUNPAL

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 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. and 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.
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

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (1 September 2006). Description based on Moore & Edgar (1970). Some of this factsheet information is derived from Flora of New Zealand Online and is used under a Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 New Zealand licence.

MORE INFORMATION

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

PDF DATE

25 May 2026