

# Juncus pusillus

## COMMON NAMES

dwarf rush

## BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: Sp, DPS, DPT, RR, SO

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## CATEGORY

Vascular

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Rushes & Allied Plants

## FLOWER COLOURS

Green, Red/Pink

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Diminutive, delicate, red-brown to dark brown, perennial forming widely creeping tufted patches arising from an ascending rhizome 0.5 mm diameter. **Stems** 1–30 × 0.2–0.3 mm, leafy, creeping and rooting below, erect above. Leaves basal and cauline, usually > stems, up to 0.2 mm wide, filiform, striated, terete, septate; sheath membranous with two obtuse auricles. **Inflorescence** terminal, usually solitary flowered, rarely with 2–3 sessile flowers or comprised of two slender branches terminated by 2–3 flowers; subtending bract > inflorescence. **Flowers** 1.5–2.0 mm long, tepals equal, initially pale green, maturing reddish. **Stamens** 6, equal in length or > tepals. **Capsule** pale brown, slightly > tepals, narrowly ovoid, distinctly mucronate.

## SIMILAR TAXA

Most likely to be confused with *J. scheuchzerioides* Gaud. (with which it grows on the Auckland Islands) and *J. novae-zelandiae* Hook.f. From *J. scheuchzerioides* it differs by the terete rather than compressed red brown to brown rather than pale green, red-green to bright green leaves which are < rather than > 0.5 mm wide. Further it has flowers which are 1.5–3 rather than 4 mm long. From *J. novae-zelandiae* it differs by the light brown rather than lustrous black tipped mature capsules and stems which are less than the length of the leaves at maturity.

## DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. new Zealand: North Island (south of Bay of Plenty), South Island.

## HABITAT

Open, swampy ground, in cushion bogs and alongside tarn, lake and river margins. Coastal to alpine. Often associated with *Juncus novae-zelandiae* Hook.f.

## GENUS

Juncus

## FAMILY

Juncaceae

## AUTHORITY

*Juncus pusillus* Buch.



Waitutu. Photographer: Colin C. Ogle, Date taken: 01/12/1984, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Herbarium specimen: AK 109060. Photographed with permission of Auckland Institute and Museum. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 23/10/2007, Licence: CC BY.

## SYNONYMS

*Juncus capillaceus* Hook.f., *Verojuncus pusillus* (Buchenau) Závěská Drábková & Pročková

## TAXONOMIC NOTES

Pročková 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

December–May

## LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

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

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easy from fresh seed and the division of whole plants. Very small, and best kept in a pot partially submerged in water.

## 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)

**pusillus**: Insignificant or weak

## NVS CODE

JUNPUS

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DP, SO, Sp

2012 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO, Sp

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon

2004 | Not Threatened

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

## REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Otago: 2025 | Regionally Threatened – Regionally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: DPR, DPS, DPT, PF, RR, Sp 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 AT, Smith HA. 1986. *Plant Names Simplified: Their pronunciation, derivation and meaning*. Landsman Bookshop Ltd, Buckenhill, UK.
- Moore LB, Edgar E. 1970. *Flora of New Zealand, Volume II. Indigenous Tracheophyta: Monocotyledones except Gramineae*. Government Printer, Wellington, NZ. 354 p.
- 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. <https://doi.org/10.11646/phytotaxa.622.1.2>.
- 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. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ppees.2009.06.001>.

## 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-pusillus/>

## PDF DATE

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