

Juncus sarophorus

COMMON NAMES

broom rush, fan-flowered 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

Green

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Densely tufted, tussock-forming, dull blue-green perennial herb. **Stems** tightly clumped and erect near base, usually drooping in upper half to one third. **Rhizome** stout, 5–10 mm diameter, horizontal. **Flowering stems** 1–2 m tall, 2–3 mm diameter, numerous, pliant though wiry, basally very hard, ridged, not shining; internal pith cobwebby, irregularly interrupted, rarely continuous. **Leaves** absent. **Basal** bracts basally black, otherwise dark red-purple, closely sheathing the stem, the uppermost bract usually straw-coloured and up to 250 mm long. **Inflorescence** lateral, many-flowered, very pale brown or cream, massed together as a dense fan-shaped head of flowers; flowers closely spaced along the numerous, stiffly erect to spreading branchlets which are pressed up hard against the very long subtending floral bract; bract overtopping flower, sometimes up to 300 mm long; flowers 2 mm long, tepals white and membranous, centrally striped green, later straw-coloured and more rigid. **Stamens** 3(–6). **Capsule** from slightly > 1.5 mm to slightly > 2 mm long, equal to or slightly > tepals, narrow, ovate-oblong, obtuse, very pale brown.

SIMILAR TAXA

Easily distinguished by the combination of the dense, tussock forming habit, blue-green, wiry, drooping stems, and compact, many-flowered, fan-shaped inflorescences. Most similar to *J. inflexus* L. which is a naturalised species differing from *J. sarophorus* by the diffuse rather than dense fan-shaped inflorescence; by the inflorescence not firmly appressed to the subtending bract; and dark purple-brown rather than light-brown capsules 2.5–3.5 rather than 1.5–2.0 mm long.

DISTRIBUTION

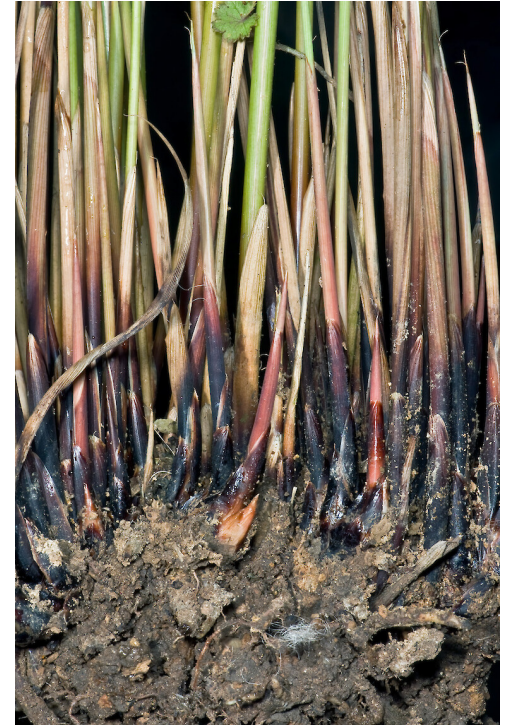
Indigenous. North Island, South Island, Stewart Island/Rakiura, Chatham Islands and Campbell Island/Motu Ihupuku. Also in Australia.

HABITAT

Coastal to lowland in damp, open ground. Often in pasture or on the margins of coastal wetlands, and along river flats. Sometimes a troublesome weed.

GENUS

Juncus



Basal bracts. In cultivation. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 21/10/2007, Licence: CC BY.



Longitudinal section of leaf showing pith. In cultivation. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 22/10/2007, Licence: CC BY.

FAMILY

Juncaceae

AUTHORITY

Juncus sarophorus L.A.S.Johnson

SYNONYMS

Agathryon sarophorum (L.A.S. Johnson) Závěská Drábková & Pročkův

TAXONOMIC NOTES

Pročkův 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

September–January

FRUITING

October–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. Can be invasive, and one of the few indigenous species that can be a pasture weed.

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)

sarophorus: (As in *Juncus sarophorus*) meaning ‘broom bearing’, from Greek *saron* brush, broom (from *sairein* to sweep); -phorus = bearing, carrying

NVS CODE

JUNSAR

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.*

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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.

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ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (1 September 2006). Description based on Moore & Edgar (1970).

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MORE INFORMATION

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

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25 May 2026