# Juncus usitatus

## 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, Yellow

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Densely tufted, clump-forming, erect, slender, wiry, bright green to dark green perennial herb. **Rhizome** 2–3 mm diameter, horizontal. **Flowering stems** 0.5–1.2 m tall, 1–1.5 mm diameter, slender, finely ridged, not shining, light yellow-green, bright green to dark green, pith interrupted by numerous, irregular shaped lacunae or continuous. **Leaves** absent. **Basal bracts** short, closely appressed to the stem, lower bracts light grey, the upper bracts light brown, paler towards the apices. **Inflorescence** lateral, many-flowered, open and spreading, branchlets slender, curved, never clustered. **Flowers** 1.5–2.0 mm long, evenly spaced along inflorescence branchlets; tepals up to 2 mm long, initially pale green with very broad membranous margin, drying straw-yellow or pale brown. **Stamens** 3. **Capsule** 1.5–2 mm long, more or less equal, equal or slightly greater than tepals, trigonous-spherical to almost globose, shining, pale straw-coloured or light brown.

## SIMILAR TAXA
The thin, wiry, usually bright-green stems, and widely and evenly spaced flower/capsules on long spreading branchlets are diagnostic for this species. It could only be confused with the introduced *J. subsecundus* N.A.Wakef. which differs by the blue-green stems and capsules which are consistently > 2 (rather than < 2) mm long.

## DISTRIBUTION
Indigenous. Kermadec, North, South, and Chatham Islands. Mainly northern but extending to about Canterbury. Also in Australia, Norfolk Island and New Caledonia.

## HABITAT
Coastal to lowland. Often on offshore islands. Usually in open ground or shrubland, more rarely under tall forest. Evidentally preferring seasonally dry clay soils or growing amongst rock. Preferring sunny situations. A common urban weed in Auckland City, where it often grows on exposures of basalt lava.

## GENUS
Juncus

## FAMILY
Juncaceae



Longitudinal section of stem showing interrupted pith. Otakaha Stream, Palliser Bay (from a specimen collected by Pat Enright). Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 21/03/2008, Licence: CC BY.

## AUTHORITY
Juncus usitatus L.A.S.Johnson

## SYNONYMS
Agathryon usitatum (L.A.S. Johnson) 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–April

## FRUITING
October–September

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

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Easy from fresh seed and by the division of whole plants. Can be invasive. Ideal for a sunny, seasonally damp clay soil.

## 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)

## NVS CODE
JUNUSI

## 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.

## 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. II, Wellington, Government Printer.
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

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-usitatus/

## PDF DATE

27 May 2026