

# Lepidosperma australe

## COMMON NAME

square sedge, square-stemmed sedge

## SYNONYMS

Vauthiera australis A.Rich.; Cladium vauthiera C.B.Clarke ex Cheeseman;  
Cladium australe (A.Rich.) Druce; Machaerina australis (A.Rich.) Koyama

## FAMILY

Cyperaceae

## AUTHORITY

Lepidosperma australe (A.Rich.) Hook.f.

## FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

## ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Sedges

## NVS CODE

LEPAUS

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2012 | Not Threatened

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

## DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. North, South, Stewart and Chatham Islands.

## HABITAT

Coastal to alpine (up to 1300 m a.s.l.), usually in open ground, seral vegetation or peat bogs. Colonising seasonally dry, or well drained substrates as well as permanently wet substrates such as peat.

## FEATURES

Stout, rush-like sedge forming dense blue-green to dark green patches up to 2 m tall. Rhizomes short, lignaceous, 2-3 mm diameter, bearing distant apiculate, dark brown scales. Culms quadrangular, glabrous, densely packed, rigidly erect, coriaceous, 0.2-2.0 m tall, 1.0-2.5 mm diameter, dark blue or grey-green (glaucous). Leaves all reduced to brown, sheathing, membranous, mucronate bracts, or the upper 1-2 with laminae quadrangular, or occasionally trigonous 50-350 mm long with subulate, pungent, dark brown apices. Inflorescences a 10-40 x 5-15 mm, dense, contracted, spicate head; subtending bract usually < inflorescence with a rigid, subulate awn up to 15 mm long. Spikelets 1-flowered, 4-5 mm long, on short, stout, stiff stalks. Glumes 4-6, the lowest broadly ovate, mucronate, the upper ones ovate-lanceolate, acuminate, coriaceous, papillose with scabrid midrib and margins, midrib distinctly thickened; only the uppermost glume fertile, the rest empty. Hypogynous scales 6, 0.5 mm long, white, triangular when mature, fused at the base to form a 6-lobed persistent cup. Anthers with an elongated red connective. Nut 4 mm long, lustrous light brown, more or less trigonous, oblong-ellipsoid, smooth, narrowed above to the persistent, scabrid style-base.



Coromandel, March. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth



Coromandel, March. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth

### SIMILAR TAXA

None. This species is easily distinguished by the culms which are usually dark blue-green and square in cross-section - hence the common names square sedge and square-stemmed sedge.

### FLOWERING

August - December

### FLOWER COLOURS

Red/Pink

### FRUITING

October - July (often present year round)

### LIFE CYCLE

Scaly nuts are dispersed by water, wind and possibly ants (Thorsen et al., 2009).

### PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Can be difficult to cultivate. The seed is difficult to germinate, and plants resent root disturbance and usually die if transplanted. However, considerable success has been achieved growing plants and/or germinating seed in untreated saw dust. Despite these problems this is an attractive species well worth attempting to grow. Once established it flourishes in a range of conditions from full sun in free draining soil to shade and permanently damp soils.

### ETYMOLOGY

**lepidosperma:** Scale seed

**australe:** Southern, from the Latin australis

### WHERE TO BUY

Plants are occasionally available from specialist nurseries.

### ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (8 September 2006). Description adapted from Moore & Edgar (1970).

### REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Moore, L.B.; Edgar, E. 1970: Flora of New Zealand. Vol. II. 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

### NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

Please cite as: de Lange, P.J. (Year at time of access): *Lepidosperma australe* Fact Sheet (content continuously updated). New Zealand Plant Conservation Network.

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/lepidosperma-australe/> (Date website was queried)

### MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/lepidosperma-australe/>