

Machaerina juncea

COMMON NAME

sedge, tussock swamp twig rush

SYNONYMS

Cladium junceum R.Br.; *Lepidosperma colensoi* Boeck.; *Baumea juncea* (R.Br.) Palla

FAMILY

Cyperaceae

AUTHORITY

Machaerina juncea (R.Br.) Koyama

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

No

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Sedges

NVS CODE

MACJUN

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2012 | Not Threatened

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. New Zealand: Three Kings, North and South Islands but scarce south of the Bay of Plenty and Waikato, and very uncommon in the South Island where it known mostly from Nelson, Marlborough and North Westland, though it extends south into Otago.

HABITAT

Coastal to lower montane. Locally common in damp sites in gum land, swamps, salt marshes, and also along lake margins and river estuaries.



Whangapoua harbour, October. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth



Sickle-shaped tip of bract. Waikumete, Auckland. Photographer: Jeremy Rolfe

FEATURES

Tufted, rush-like, rhizomatous perennial. Rhizome 3–10 mm diameter, woody, usually shortly creeping, sometimes greatly elongated, covered with loose, papery, imbricate, light brown bracts. Culms 0.2–1.35 tall, 1.0–3.5 mm wide, arising in mostly short-spaced (crowded) tufts along rhizome, terete, rigid, erect, smooth, glaucous to glaucescent, with 1–2 distant nodes. Leaves all reduced to light brown or reddish sheathing bracts, the lowermost smaller, mucronate, the upper 1–3 longer, distant along the culm, usually dark brown at the orifice, with a small, sickle-shaped, laterally flattened mucro-like lamina up to 5 mm long. Inflorescence 25–100 mm long, stiff, erect, spike-like, sparingly branched, subtended by a much shorter sheathing bract. Spikelets not fascicled, 4–5 mm long, red-brown, 1–2-flowered, only the lowest flowers fertile. Glumes 4–5, oblong-lanceolate, acute, membranous, streaked with brown, scabrid on the keel and towards the tip. Nut 2.5–3.0 × c. 1.5 mm, oblong-ovoid, obscurely trigonous, dark brown to black, orange near the base, surface pitted, surmounted by the small, tumid, pubescent style-base.

SIMILAR TAXA

Easily distinguished from other New Zealand species of *Machaerina* by the leaves which are reduced to sheathing bracts and from *M. tenax* by the uppermost sheathing bracts distant along culm (rather than clustered at the stem base), each surmounted by a short, falcate lamina and also by the glumes not spreading (rather than spreading in *M. tenax*) as the fruit matures. *Machaerina* is superficially similar to *Apodasmia similis* with which it often grows, and from which it is distinguished by the grey-green, red-green to orange-yellow stems bearing regularly spaced bract-like, sheathing dark brown or maroon-black leaves, and by the terminal, many-flowered, paniculate to fascicled male and female spikelets.

FLOWERING

October - December

FRUITING

Fruits may be found throughout the year

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from rooted pieces and fresh seed. Rooted pieces establish best if first healed in within a potting medium of mostly untreated saw dust. Once established remarkably tolerant of drought. Does best when planted in full sun, in a permanently damp soil. *Machaerina juncea* is not fussy about soil fertility but does best in a slightly acidic soil. *Machaerina juncea* is also tolerant of saline conditions and can be planted into salt marshes and along estuarine creeks and lagoons.

ETYMOLOGY

juncea: Rush-like

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (16 February 2012). 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 2009 Vol. 11 No. 4 pp. 285-309

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/machaerina-juncea/>