

Machaerina tenax

SYNONYMS

Lampocarya tenax Hook.f.; Cladium tenax (Hook.f.) Druce; Baumea tenax (Hook.f.) Blake

FAMILY

Cyperaceae

AUTHORITY

Machaerina tenax (Hook.f.) Koyama

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Sedges

NVS CODE

MACTEN

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2012 | Not Threatened

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Grass-green, reed-like tufted sedge. Culms narrow, terete, internally septate culms. Inflorescences dark brown to black-brown, spike-like with narrow and pointed apices; inflorescence branches tapered, more or less widely spaced, spikelets clustered. Nut smooth, yellow when mature.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: North, South, Stewart and Chatham Islands (but scarce in Northland and much of the eastern South Island).

HABITAT

Coastal to subalpine. Usually on peat in bogs, around tarns and slow flowing peaty streams. However, Machaerina tenax has also been found growing in poorly draining pasture and in rough pasture land in hill country, at the back of estuarine swamps (where it may grow with *M. juncea* and *M. complanata*) and under willow in willow car.



Machaerina tenax culms. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth



Machaerina tenax flowering inflorescence. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth

FEATURES

Stout, densely tufted, light-green (grass-green) perennial. Rhizome 2–3 mm diameter, with culms closely and evenly spaced along it. Culms, 0.15–1.65 m tall, 0.5–1.5 mm wide, slender, terete, rigidly pliant and wiry. Leaves reduced to basal, reddish pink, sheathing bracts; the uppermost often furnished with a terete lamina like the culm.

Inflorescence 50–250 mm long, very narrow, spike-like; branchlets remote, slender, erect from sheathing mucronate bracts. Spikelets 6–8 mm long, ± distant, not fascicled, light grey-brown or reddish, distinct at the tips of the branchlets, 1-flowered. Glumes usually 3, 2 lower glumes ± membranous, lanceolate, shortly acuminate, the uppermost glume longer, spreading with maturation of the fruit. Nut, including beak, c.2.5 × 1.5 mm, yellow, ovoid (trigonus when immature), narrowed below to a short, dark brown stalk, narrowed above to a dark brown, pyramidal beak, c.1 mm long, rounded at the tip.

SIMILAR TAXA

Machaerina tenax is recognised by the grass-green, narrow, terete, internally septate culms; dark brown to black-brown, spike-like inflorescences which narrow toward and are at pointed at the apex; by the more or less approximate spikelet branchlets; and by the yellow, smooth-surfaced nut.

FLOWERING

December - February

FRUITING

Fruits present throughout the year

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Difficult. Can be grown from fresh seed but slow to establish. Resents root disturbance. Plants seem to flourish best if established first in untreated pine saw dust. *Machaerina tenax* is an attractive species that does well when planted in seepages in full sun or around ponds. It prefers a moderately acidic substrate.

ETYMOLOGY

tenax: Tough

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (25 March 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-tenax/>