Morelotia affinis

COMMON NAMES
morelotia

BIOSTATUS
Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | Not Threatened
Jump to previous conservation statuses

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Sedges

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Harsh, leafy tufted perennial sedge 200-700 mm tall. **Rootstock**, stout, lignaceous. **Leaves** numerous, » culms, 200–620 × 4–8 mm, green to yellow-green (rarely dark green), flat, curving, scabrid on the abaxial, tapering to a filiform apex, this usually curled when dry; margins scabrid, strongly revolute in the long persistent dry old leaves; sheath rather short compared to lamina, not demarcated from lamina by any transverse line but merely becoming broader, cream, with membranous margins. **Panicle** erect, rigid, 60–300 mm long, with short, more or less distant branchlets subtended by rigid, scabrid, leaf-like bracts. **Spikelets** 6.5–10.0 mm long, narrow-lanceolate, shortly stalked. **Glumes** coriaceous, minutely puberulous, keel and margins finely scabrid; 4 outer glumes smaller, increasing in size, usually acuminate, 2 upper glumes much longer, acute, rigid; a seventh minute membranous glume subtending the uppermost sterile flower. **Nut** 2.5–3.0 × 1.5 mm, elliptic-oblong, lustrous red-brown to black, with 3 longitudinal ribs, surmounted by a thickened, corky style-base which is very distinct in the immature fruit; ripe fruit retained on plant for a time by being entangled in the slightly elongated staminal filaments.

SIMILAR TAXA
Rather close to *Gahnia* J.R.Forst. et G.Forst. from which it is best distinguished by the smaller stature and by the distichous arrangement of the glumes. Some botanists regard *Morelotia* as indistinguishable from *Gahnia*, treating the New Zealand plant as *Gahnia affinis* (Brong.) Steud.

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic. North Island, South Island from Te Paki south to south-west Nelson.

HABITAT
Coastal to montane. usually on steep clay banks and hillsides in gumland scrub, shrublands and other regenerating mainly indigenous vegetation. Sometimes in pine plantations. Also colonising steep rock faces, gorges and boulder falls.

GENUS
Morelotia

FAMILY
Cyperaceae



Fruiting head, Okere Falls, Rotorua. Photographer: Colin C. Ogle, Date taken: 10/05/2016, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Kauaeranga Valley. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 31/10/2007, Licence: CC BY.

AUTHORITY
Morelotia affinis (Brong.) Blake

SYNONYMS
Lampocarya affinis Brong.; Morelotia gahniaeformus Gaud. var. minor A.Rich.; Gahnia arenaria Hook.f.; Mariscus affinis (Brong.) Kuntze; Machaerina affinis (Brong.) Kern

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
October–December

FRUITING
November–April (but old inflorescences present throughout the year)

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Very difficult to cultivate. The seed is difficult to germinate and plants resent root disturbance, so usually die if transplanted. However, considerable success has been achieved growing plants and germinating seed in untreated saw dust. Although tricky this is a species worth persevering with, as it has an attractive form and once established is very drought resistant. It does best in full sun on rock or planted within a poorly drained clay soils.

ETYMOLOGY
affinis: From the Latin ad + finis 'to the boundary', means 'neighbouring', 'allied to', 'akin to'

NVS CODE
MORAFF

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 46

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2017 | Not Threatened
2012 | Not Threatened
2009 | Not Threatened
2004 | Not Threatened
Jump to current conservation status

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES
Auckland: 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. 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
Moore LB, Edgar E. 1970. Flora of New Zealand, Volume II. Indigenous Tracheophyta: Monocotyledones except Gramineae. Government Printer, Wellington, NZ. 354 p.

ATTRIBUTION
Description adapted from Moore and Edgar (1970)
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MORE INFORMATION
https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/morelotia-affinis/

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