

Paspalum vaginatum

COMMON NAMES

saltwater paspalum

BIOSTATUS

Exotic

CONSERVATION STATUS

Not applicable

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Grasses

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Decumbent perennial grass with long creeping stolons. **Leaf-blade** up to 8 cm × 2 mm, rather stiff and much narrower than the sheath. **Culm** up to about 20 cm tall, panicle consisting of 2 spreading racemes.

SIMILAR TAXA

Not immediately obvious as paspalum, but close inspection reveals characteristic seed-heads. Can be separated from other paspalum species by the inflorescence of 2 racemes, the long spikelets (2.5–4.5 mm) and the upper glume glabrous (*P. distichum* has minutely appressed pubescence on upper glume). It is also the most salt-tolerant so location is important for identification.

HABITAT

Aquatic: Emergent. Found in brackish water around the margins of river mouths and estuaries.

GENUS

Paspalum

FAMILY

Poaceae

AUTHORITY

Paspalum vaginatum Sw.

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

YEAR NATURALISED

1855

ORIGIN

Europe

REASON FOR INTRODUCTION

Agricultural

TOLERANCES

Grows in marginal saline habitats.



Paspalum vaginatum. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



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LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

Spreads vegetatively by stolons and by seed. Dispersed by sand movement.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACW: Facultative Wetland

Usually is a hydrophyte but occasionally found in uplands (non-wetlands).

ETYMOLOGY

paspalum: The Greek name for millet

ENVIRONMENTAL WEED (2024)

This plant is named in a list of 386 environmental weeds in New Zealand 2024 prepared by DOC. 759 candidate species were considered for inclusion on this new comprehensive list of environmental weeds in New Zealand. The species considered were drawn from published lists of weed species, lists of plants that must be reported or managed by law if observed, existing national and regional programmes and agreements for pest management, and species already managed by the Department of Conservation (DOC). Candidate species were then assessed to see if they were fully naturalised and whether they have more than minor impacts in natural ecosystems. Read the full report [here](#).

NVS CODE

PASVAG

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/paspalum-vaginatatum/>

PDF DATE

25 May 2026