

Schoenus brevifolius

COMMON NAMES

bog schoenus, the stabber

BIOSTATUS

Native

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Sedges

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Rush-like sedge up to 1 m tall. **Rhizome** hard, lignaceous and coarse, up to 8 mm diameter, covered with closely appressed, dark red, red-black to black glossy bracts. **Culms** closely packed, rigidly erect, 0.5–1.3 m long, c. 2 mm diameter, dark green to yellow-green, smooth, often shallowly grooved on one side, apex maturing as a hard, grey, woody cap-like spike. **Leaves** reduced to 3–4 very dark red, hard, mucronate sheaths, the 2 uppermost with a short, subulate, erect lamina; orifice of sheath not ciliate. **Panicle** 80–300 mm long, very narrow, upright and stiff, occasionally bent at the apex, with more or less distant fascicles of 3–5 branchlets, each fascicle subtended by a short sheath similar to those at culm base; branchlets flexuous, flattened, with scabrid margins, often branched again, sheaths subtending secondary branchlets ciliate at the mouth. **Spikelet** terminating each branchlet 9–12 mm long, 2–4-flowered, lanceolate, red-brown. **Glumes** 7–14, ovate-lanceolate, acute, margins ciliate towards the apex, 4–6, lower glumes smaller, empty, 2–3 succeeding glumes fertile, uppermost 2–3 glumes sterile. **Hypogynous bristles** 0. **Stamens** usually 2, occasionally 3. **Style-branches** 3. **Nut** 1.5 × 1 mm, cream, turgid, surface distinctly rugose.

SIMILAR TAXA

Differs from the other rush-like *Schoenus* species with open, distantly spaced panicles by the culms which are c. 2 mm diameter and by the nuts which are distinctly rugose.

DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. North and South Islands. Also in Australia, New Caledonia and the Bonin Islands. In New Zealand mainly found from North Cape to about the southern Waikato and Rotorua district. Also recorded from the Nelson area.

HABITAT

Coastal to lower montane (up to 500 m a.s.l.). Preferring peat bogs—often ones dominated by restiads—but also frequent in gumland scrub, and in open, boggy ground within kauri (*Agathis australis* (D.Don) Lindl.) forest.

GENUS

Schoenus

FAMILY

Cyperaceae



Tip of young culm. Kopouatai. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 17/07/2007, Licence: CC BY.



At Kopouatai swamp, February. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

AUTHORITY

Schoenus brevifolius R.Br.

SYNONYMS

Chaetospora tenax Hook.f.; Schoenus tenax (Hook.f.) Hook.f.; Schoenus brevifolius subsp. tenax (Hook.f.) Kük.; Schoenus brevifolius R.Br. var. tenax (Hook.f.) Koyama

ENDEMIC TAXON

No

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

September–January

FRUITING

November–June

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Difficult. Can be grown from the division of whole plants and fresh seed but resents root disturbance. Best in a permanently damp, somewhat acidic soil in full sun.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACW: Facultative Wetland

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

ETYMOLOGY

schoenus: Rush

brevifolius: Short-leaved

NVS CODE

SCHBRE

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Auckland: 2025 | Regionally At Risk – Regionally Declining | Qualifiers: Sp, DPR, DPS, DPT, PF, RR, SO 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).

Some of this factsheet information is derived from [Flora of New Zealand Online](#) and is used under a [Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 New Zealand](#) licence.

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/schoenus-brevifolius/>

PDF DATE

08 June 2026