

Schoenus caespitans

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: Sp, DPS, DPT

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CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Sedges

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Densely tufted, caespitose sedge. **Culms** numerous, 15–60–(200) mm long, ≤ 0.5 mm diameter, densely packed at base, otherwise rather flaccid, unbranched, glabrous, occasionally finely scabrid just below inflorescence. **Leaves** 20–600–(800) mm long, usually equal to or greater than the culm length; yellow green to dull green, linear to very narrow-linear, acute, channelled, margins slightly scabrid; sheaths membranous, reddish to red-purple. **Panicle** of 2–3 mostly densely clustered (rarely distant) fascicles, the terminal usually with sessile to subsessile, densely clustered spikelets, the lower fascicles, shortly stalked, bearing densely to loosely clustered spikelets; bract subtending each fascicle leaf-like, lowest bract overtopping whole inflorescence. **Spikelets** 3–5 mm long, 1–(2)-flowered; if 2-flowered, the second flower male. **Glumes** dark red-brown, dull to somewhat glossy, with a prominent cream centre; midrib slightly scabrid; lower 1–3 glumes usually empty, often mucronate.

Hypogynous bristles 6, > nut. **Stamens** 3. **Style-branches** 3. **Nut** slightly $< 1.0 \times 0.5$ mm, white with the 3 angles green or yellow, elliptic-oblong, almost globose, obtuse, apiculate, surface when viewed with a lens, minutely cellular, individual cells rather small.

SIMILAR TAXA

Schoenus apogon is very similar (and in some treatments *S. caespitans* is regarded as a variety of it). From *S. apogon*, *S. caespitans* differs by its mostly smaller more densely tufted growth habit, culms up to 200 mm long, and ≤ 0.5 mm wide; by the leaves \geq length of the culms, 1–(2)-flowered spikelets that are 3–5 mm long (in *S. apogon* the spikelets are 2–4-flowered and 4–6 mm long) and by the red-brown glumes which have a prominent cream centre, rather than mostly red to red-purple or almost black, rarely with a pale cream patch near the midrib. The surface of the nuts of *S. caespitans* has much smaller, minute cells than *S. apogon*.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. North and South Islands, from the north-western Ruahines south and east to Cape Palliser, on DURville Island and eastern Marlborough to the Hunter Hills, South Canterbury.

HABITAT

Coastal to subalpine (up to 1100 m a.s.l.). In open ground, and under sparse scrub where it is usually found on damp clay but also in seasonally dry, poorly drained soils, and on ultramafic substrates (and then found around seepages and tarns). Often in short-tussock or silver tussock (*Poa cita* Edgar) grassland.



In cultivation. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 19/10/2007, Licence: CC BY.



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THREATS

Not Threatened but not very common either. Possibly qualifies as a Sparse species.

GENUS

Schoenus

FAMILY

Cyperaceae

AUTHORITY

Schoenus caespitans Petrie

SYNONYMS

Schoenus apogon var. caespitans (Petrie) Edgar

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

August–April

FRUITING

September–June

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from rooted pieces and fresh seed. An excellent pot plant. Quite tolerant of dry conditions as well as wet. Requires full sun.

ETYMOLOGY

schoenus: Rush

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 8

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DP, Sp

2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DP, SO, Sp

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon

2004 | Not Threatened

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

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/schoenus-caespitans/>

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