

Schoenus nitens

BIOSTATUS

Native

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO

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CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Sedges

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Rhizomatous, tufted rush-like sedge. **Rhizomes** lignaceous, up to 1.5 mm diameter, loosely covered by large, membranous, overlapping scales. **Culms** 10–400 mm long, slightly greater than 0.5 mm diameter, dark green, red-green to greenish brown, wiry, erect, striated, unbranched, densely tufted or widely spaced along rhizome. **Leaves** less than culms, upper leaves alternate, rigidly setaceous, semi-terete, margins rarely scabrid towards leaf apex; basal leaves reduced to red-purple, grooved, mucronate sheaths. **Inflorescence** terminal, capitate with crowded sessile spikelets, subtending bract greater than inflorescence. **Spikelets** (2)–4–many, 2–5 mm long, 2–3-flowered. **Glumes** 5–7, bright chestnut-brown with green median nerve, 2–3 lowest smaller, empty. **Hypogynous bristles** 6, usually > nut, yellow-brown and scabrid towards the apex, often branched and basally plumose with long white hairs. **Stamens** 3. **Style branches** 3. **Nut** ovoid to elliptical-oblong, 1.5 mm long, light grey-brown to red-brown, smooth, glossy, surface cells minute (appearing as dimples), angles scarcely thickened.

SIMILAR TAXA

Schoenus concinnus (Hook.f.) Hook.f. is somewhat similar but differs by its finer culms, more densely tufted growth habit, smaller stature, often solitary spikelets (there may occasionally be three spikelets), subacute rather than obtuse glumes, and yellow-brown rather than grey-brown to red-brown, larger nut (1.5–2.0 mm cf. 1.5 mm long). *Schoenus nitens* differs from the other rush-like species by having well developed leaves.

DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. North, South and Chatham Islands. Also in Australia and New Guinea. In New Zealand abundant from about Whatipu south to Wellington - with scattered populations in the far north (Reef Point, Te Aupouri, and Te Pahi). Scarce in the South Island. Abundant on the main Chatham Island.

HABITAT

Coastal. A species of damp ground within sand flats, dune swales, and the margins of tidal creeks, brackish swamps, lagoons and ponds.

GENUS

Schoenus

FAMILY

Cyperaceae

AUTHORITY

Schoenus nitens (R.Br.) Roem. et Schult.

SYNONYMS

Chaetospora nitens R.Br.; *Scirpus nitens* (R.Br.) Boeck., *Schoenus nitens* (R.Br.) Roem. et Schult. var. *nitens*

ENDEMIC TAXON

No

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

October–February

FRUITING

December–July

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from the division of established plants and from fresh seed. Prefers a damp, well drained 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

NVS CODE

SCHNTE

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 74

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

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REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Auckland: 2025 | Regionally Threatened – Regionally Increasing | Qualifiers: CI, DPR, DPS, DPT, INC [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.

Otago: 2025 | Regionally Data Deficient [Help](#)

The regional threat classification system leverages off the national assessments in the NZTCS, providing information relevant for the regional context. Otago conservation status information is sourced from the [“Conservation Status of Indigenous Vascular Plants in Otago, 2025”](#) Jarvie S 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/schoenus-nitens/>

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