

Sparganium subglobosum

COMMON NAMES

bur-reed, maru

BIOSTATUS

Native

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT, SO

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Monocots

FLOWER COLOURS

White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Glabrous, summer-green, rhizomatous, perennial herb of aquatic or fertile swamps. Rhizomes ascending, long and slender. Stems usually partially submerged in water, silt, mud or peat. Plants at flowering up to 1 m tall. Leaves most arising from base, somewhat spongy to firmly fleshy; 0.3-1 m tall, up to 10 mm wide, more or less erect; sheathing base channelled; lamina dark green, green to yellow green, linear to narrow linear, deltoid to subrhomboid in cross-section, longitudinal nerves distinct; incomplete cross walls occasionally evident apex obtuse to subacute. Peduncle up to 2 mm diameter, usually shorter than leaves; lower bracts foliaceous, long, often with basal third to one half clasping peduncle. Inflorescence simple or sparingly branched; main axis bearing up to 20 globose capitula; lower 1-6 female, rest male; lateral axis often bearing only male capitula, sometimes with up to 2 female capitula below; capitula sessile and either strictly axillary or without bracts. Flowers white. Male capitula up to 15 mm diameter, flowers numerous; stamens 3 mm long, filaments much > perianth; anthers conspicuous, white, oblong. basifixed, up to 3 times as long as broad. Female capitula to 18 mm diameter, flowers up to 60; perianth scales 4-8, the inner ones smaller; ovary 4 mm long, sessile, narrowly fusiform, unilocular, ovule solitary, pendulous; style short; stigma oval, c.1/2 style-length. Fruit 6 x 3 mm, dry, indehiscent, externally hard, internal spongy; dark green to yellow-green, sessile, obovoid, style base forming a hard, prolonged beak.

SIMILAR TAXA

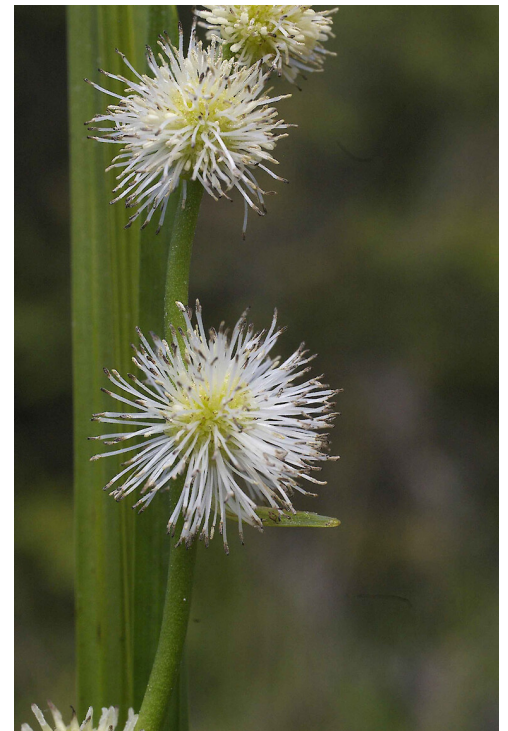
None. The summer-green, soft, bright to dark green, linear leaves which are distinctly deltoid to subrhomboid in cross-section; and the simple to few-branched inflorescence bearing distinctive globose, many-flowered capitula, and/or globose spiky fruits are highly diagnostic of this species

DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. North and South Islands. Present throughout the North Island though often scarce over large parts of this range. In the South Island very uncommon, known from Nelson, Marlborough, north Westland and from the Canterbury Plains. Also in Australia.



Sparganium subglobosum. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Sparganium subglobosum. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

HABITAT

Coastal to lowland (up to 400 m a.s.l.). Usually an emergent in shallow water, often on the margins of ponds, lakes and slow flowing streams. Also found in fens, and within the lagg zone of acidic bog systems. Usually preferring open sites, though sometimes found under Willows (*Salix* L. spp.) in moderately heavy shade.

GENUS

Sparganium

FAMILY

Sparganiaceae

AUTHORITY

Sparganium subglobosum Morong

SYNONYMS

Sparganium antipodum Graeb.

ENDEMIC TAXON

No

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

September - April

FRUITING

November - May

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from fresh seed and by division of established plants. Best grown in full sun with the roost permanently submerged. An excellent plant for a shallow pond or slow flowing stream. However, can be grown in partially submerged pots.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

OBL: Obligate Wetland

Almost always is a hydrophyte, rarely in uplands (non-wetlands).

WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available

ETYMOLOGY

subglobosum: From the Latin sub- 'somewhat' or 'not quite' and globosus 'globe shaped', i.e. nearly spherical

NVS CODE

SPASUB

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

$2n = c.30$

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: DP, SO

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Auckland: 2025 | Regionally Threatened – Regionally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: 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).

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/sparganium-subglobosum/>

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08 June 2026