Zostera muelleri subsp. novozelandica

COMMON NAMES
seagrass, eelgrass, nana, zostera, rimurehia

BIOSTATUS
Native

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: EF, SO
Jump to previous conservation statuses

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Herbs - Monocots

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Grass-like plants of mud or sandy-silt shallow marine environments. **Rhizomes** compressed 1–2 mm diameter, widely creeping, rooting at nodes; internodes 10–20 mm long. **Leaf-sheath** 20–40 mm long, becoming fibrous with age, the broad membranous margins inflexed and each terminating in an erect rounded auricle. **Lamina** 50–300 × 1–2 mm; primary nerves 3, interstitial nerves 4–6, cross veins usually at more or less regular, long intervals and mostly all extending from the median to marginal nerve, producing a pattern of distinctive long oblongs. **Erect stems** narrow, flattened, the subfloral peduncular internode 10–60 × 0.6–1.0 mm. **Spathe-like sheath** 15–25 × 2.0–2.5 mm (folded width), its margins squarely truncate at the apex and its terminating lamina 30–80 × 1.5–2.0 mm. **Spadix** often shorter than spathe; retinacula usually 3 on each side, broadly obliquely ovate 1.0–1.5 × 1.0 mm and 2.0–2.5 mm apart. **Stamens and carpels** closely packed, carpels rarely > 6 and anther-sacs about twice their number, all sloping obliquely inwards and upwards. **Achene** elliptic-oblong, 2.5 × 1.0 mm; seed smooth, yellow.

Puatahanui Inlet. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 05/12/2009, Licence: CC BY.

Whangapoua Harbour. January. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

SIMILAR TAXA
None. Plants referred to *Zostera capricorni* in Flora II are merely larger forms of the same subspecies. The type of *Z. capricorni* is Australian and plants matching that type are not found in New Zealand.

DISTRIBUTION
Indigenous. North Island, South Island and Stewart Island/Rakiura. Throughout southern and eastern Australia.

HABITAT
Marine. Mostly submerged in estuaries where it is found on intertidal and subtidal flats of sandy mud. Often in channels or deep pools of water

THREATS
Eelgrass communities are declining throughout their range because of widespread siltation and increasingly poor water quality.

GENUS
Zostera

FAMILY
Zosteraceae

AUTHORITY
Zostera muelleri subsp. novozelandica (Setch.) S.W.L.Jacobs

SYNONYMS
Z. novazelandica Setch., Zostera muelleri Irmisch.ex Asch.; Zostera muelleri subsp. novaezelandica (Setch.) S.W.L.Jacobs orth. var.

ENDEMIC TAXON
No

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
October–February

FRUITING
January–February

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Easily grown in saltwater tanks but otherwise difficult. Plants can be easily propagated through division.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING
OBL: Obligate Wetland
Almost always is a hydrophyte, rarely in uplands (non-wetlands).

WHERE TO BUY
Not commerically available.

ETYMOLOGY
zostera: Girdle or belt
muelleri: Named after Baron Ferdinand von Mueller, 19th century German/Australian botanist and founder of the National Herbarium of Victoria

NVS CODE
ZOSMSN

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 24

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2017 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: EF, SO
2012 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: SO
2009 | Not Threatened
2004 | Not Threatened
Jump to current conservation status

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES
Auckland: 2025 | Regionally Not Threatened | Qualifiers: DPT, 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.
Otago: 2025 | Regionally At Risk – Regionally Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: CI, DPS, DPT, EF, PF, RR 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).

MORE INFORMATION

https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/zostera-muelleri-subsp-novozelandica/

PDF DATE

08 June 2026