

Eleocharis acuta

COMMON NAMES

sharp spike sedge

SYNONYMS

Eleocharis acuta R.Br. var. *platylepis* Hook.f.; *Eleocharis acuta* R.Br. var. *tenuis* Carse

FAMILY

Cyperaceae

AUTHORITY

Eleocharis acuta R.Br.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

No

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Sedges

NVS CODE

ELEACU

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 20

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. In New Zealand found on the Kermadec Islands, North Island, South Island, Stewart Island/Rakiura and Chatham Islands. Also in Australia and on Norfolk Island.

HABITAT

Coastal to montane. Common in open to partially shaded permanently damp ground. Usually in swamps, and on stream, river, pond, and lake margins. Sometimes present in seepages within pasture.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

OBL: Obligate Wetland

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



Eleocharis acuta at Opuatia. Photographer: Wayne Bennett, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Upper leaf sheath. Wairarapa. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 10/04/2007, Licence: CC BY.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Terrestrial or semi-aquatic sedge forming yellow-green to green somewhat distinct, crowded tufts. **Rhizomes** lignaceous, widely creeping, 1–2 mm diameter. **Culms** more or less crowded in distant tufts, 15–900 × 0.5–2.5 mm, more or less erect, terete, distinctly striated; lower sheath dark red to maroon with an oblique orifice, upper sheath paler, closely appressed to culm, orifice usually truncate or rarely slightly oblique, with dark thickened edge and distinct mucro at back. **Spikelet** 5–25 × 2–5 mm, cylindrical, acute at apex. **Glumes** numerous, basal 2 sterile, shorter, broader and paler than rest, upper glumes ovate-lanceolate with hyaline apices. **Hypogynous bristles** 6–8, ≥ nut. **Stamens** 3. **Style** 3-fid. **Nut** 1.5 × 1.0 mm, obovoid, biconvex or plano-convex, pale brown, smooth or faintly reticulate; the small persistent style-base triangular, compressed, white or very pale brown.

SIMILAR TAXA

Distinguished from the somewhat similar *Eleocharis pusilla* R.Br. and *E. gracilis* R.Br. by the much larger size, and by the usually truncate (only rarely slightly oblique), distinctly mucronate uppermost leaf-sheath which has a thickened orifice. In the other two species the uppermost leaf-sheath has a consistently oblique orifice and is without a mucro.

FLOWERING

September–January

FRUITING

October–May

LIFE CYCLE

Bristly nuts are dispersed by water and possibly wind and attachment (Thorsen et al., 2009).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easy from fresh seed and the division of whole plants. Does best partially submerged but will also grow in damp soil. Needs full sun to flower.

ETYMOLOGY

eleocharis: Charm of the swamp

acuta: From the Latin acutatus 'sharp', refers to something sharpened or with an acute angle

CULTIVATION

Occasionally sold by specialist native plant nurseries.

ATTRIBUTION

Description adapted from Moore and Edgar (1970)

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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.

Thorsen MJ, Dickinson KJM, Seddon PJ. 2009. Seed dispersal systems in the New Zealand flora. *Perspectives in Plant Ecology, Evolution and Systematics* 11: 285–309.

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/eleocharis-acuta/>

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