

Eleocharis gracilis

COMMON NAMES

slender spike sedge

SYNONYMS

Eleocharis gracilis R.Br. var. *gracillima* Hook.f.; *Eleocharis gracilis* R.Br. var. *radicans* Hook.f.; *Eleocharis cunninghamii* Boeck.; *Eleocharis gracillima* (Hook.f.) Hook.f.; *Eleocharis hookeri* Boeck.

FAMILY

Cyperaceae

AUTHORITY

Eleocharis gracilis R.Br.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

No

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Sedges

NVS CODE

ELEGRA

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 20

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. In New Zealand present in the North Island, South Island, Chatham Islands and Stewart Island/Rakiura. Present in Australia and Norfolk Island.

HABITAT

Coastal to subalpine. A species of usually open situations on permanently damp ground such as lake, pond, tarn, stream and river sides, and wetlands.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

OBL: Obligate Wetland

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



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



Waikuku Beach. Photographer: Gillian M. Crowcroft, Licence: All rights reserved.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Terrestrial or semi-aquatic sedge forming green to red-green tufts. **Rhizomes** widely creeping, 1–3 mm diameter, loosely ensheathed at each nodes by conspicuous dark maroon, obtuse bracts with broad membranous margins. **Culms** densely tufted to widely spaced (or set close together in a linear series), 20–400 × 0.5 mm, erect or curved; sheaths membranous, with maroon to purple markings and an oblique orifice. **Spikelets** conspicuous, 3–8 × 1–4 mm, 5–20-flowered, ovoid to almost lanceolate, subacute. **Glumes** oblong, obtuse, 1-nerved, membranous, margins often very broad. **Hypogynous bristles** 4–8, usually > nut. **Stamens** 3. **Style** 3-fid. **Nut** slightly < 1.5 mm long, slightly < 1 mm diameter, trigonous, obovoid, light to dark brown, smooth, surmounted by the pyramidal, persistent style-base.

SIMILAR TAXA

Most likely to be confused with *Eleocharis pusilla* R.Br. from which it differs by widely creeping rather than ascending rhizome; by the spikelets > 3 mm long (rather than 2.5–3 mm long); hypogynous bristles 4–8 (rather than absent or occasionally 2–3); and by the smooth nut (rather than nut with the surface covered in prominent vertical ribs and fine transverse bars). *Eleocharis gracilis* and *E. pusilla* may at times be sympatric.

FLOWERING

August–January

FRUITING

October–May

LIFE CYCLE

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

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from fresh seed and rooted pieces. Prefers a permanently damp situation in full sun.

ETYMOLOGY

eleocharis: Charm of the swamp

gracilis: Slender

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.

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

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

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