

# Schoenoplectus pungens

## COMMON NAME

three-square

## SYNONYMS

*Scirpus pungens* Vahl; *Scirpus novae-zelandiae* Colenso; *Scirpus americanus* Pers. mispl. name; *Schoenoplectus americanus* (Pers.) Volkart ex Schinz et R.Keller, mispl. name; *Fimbristylis rara* R.Br.; *Iria rara* (R.Br.) Kuntze

## FAMILY

Cyperaceae

## AUTHORITY

*Schoenoplectus pungens* (Vahl) Palla

## FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

## ENDEMIC TAXON

No

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Sedges

## NVS CODE

SCHPUN

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

## DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. North, South and Chatham Islands. In the North Island found from West Auckland and Coromandel south, often scattered and apparently absent from Taranaki, extending inland along the Waikato River. In the South Island scattered and uncommon in Westland and Fiordland—found inland at Pareora Gorge (Canterbury) and Central Otago. Common on Chatham Island. Widespread in western Europe, America and Australia.

## HABITAT

Coastal to montane (up to 400 m a.s.l.). Usually not far from the sea in saltmarshes, brackish swamps and estuaries. Also more rarely found inland around freshwater lakes and ponds, and in damp saline slacks. Also recorded from waters draining geothermal sites along the Waikato River.

## WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

OBL: Obligate Wetland

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



Raglan harbour, March. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Raglan harbour, March. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Summer-green perennial. **Rhizome** 2–8 mm diameter, woody, with membranous, chartaceous scales at the nodes and numerous reddish fibrous roots. **Culms** 0.15–1.8 m, 1–6 mm diameter, pale glaucous-grey to dark green, triquetrous, with concave sides, smooth, soft, bearing 1–2 very thin, membranous sheaths at the base. **Leaves** 1–4, < culm, 1–3 mm wide, linear, channelled, becoming triangular with margins sparingly scabrid towards the obtuse apex, adaxial surface membranous with obvious internal septa; sheaths long, closed, largely membranous. **Inflorescence** apparently lateral, of 1–4 unequal, closely compacted, sessile, spikelets; subtending bract 20–60 mm long, similar to stem and continuous with it, scabrid towards apex. **Spikelets** 6–11 × 3–5 mm, ovate, elliptic, dark purple-brown. **Glumes** broadly ovate, smooth, membranous, margins fimbriate, emarginate, midrib prolonged, mucronate, small, round teeth of glume apex. **Hypogynous bristles** 2–6, < nut, retrorsely scabrid, red-brown. **Stamens** 3. **Style-branches** 3. **Nut** 3 × 2 mm, obovoid, plano-convex to subtrigonal, prominently apiculate, smooth, grey-brown.

## SIMILAR TAXA

*Schoenoplectus pungens* is not easily confused with either *S. californicus* (C.A.Mey.) Palla or *S. tabernaemontani* (C.C.Gmel.) Palla, species that are much taller (up to 4 m cf. 1 m in *S. pungens*), and have umbellate inflorescences bearing many spikelets, rather than dense, compact, sessile inflorescences of 1–3 spikelets. Furthermore, neither *S. californicus* or *S. tabernaemontani* have culms that are uniformly 3-angled for their entire length.

## FLOWERING

October–January

## FRUITING

January–June

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from fresh seed and the division of whole plants.

## ETYMOLOGY

**pungens**: Sharp-pointed

## WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available

## ATTRIBUTION

Description adapted from Moore and Edgar (1970).

## 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.

## MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/schoenoplectus-pungens/>