

Schoenoplectus tabernaemontani

COMMON NAMES

kuawa

BIOSTATUS

Native

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Sedges

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Rhizome 3–8 mm diameter, horizontal, hard and woody, red-brown, with loose papery, grey, well spaced, scales, 20 mm long; roots numerous, fibrous, reddish. **Culms** 0.6–3.0 m, 3–10 mm diameter, crowded or distant on rhizome, terete with spongy pith. **Leaves** reduced to loose, grey-brown, papery sheaths at base of culms, the uppermost to 350 mm long. **Inflorescence** seemingly lateral, comprised of numerous spikelets in a cymose irregular umbel, primary rays 10–60 mm long, scabrid; subtending terete bract.

SIMILAR TAXA

Schoenoplectus californicus (C.A.Mey.) Palla is an aggressive weedy species that is somewhat similar. It reaches 4 m in height, and differs by the culm being triangular in the upper third rather than terete (in cross-section) for its entire length, by the pendulous rather than spreading spikelets and plumose rather than scabrid hypogynous bristles.

Schoenoplectus pungens (Vahl) Palla differs by its consistently triangular (in cross section) culms, and sessile 1–3 spikelets. Overall it is a much smaller plant than either of the other two species.

DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. North, South and Chatham Islands. Throughout the North Island, in the South Island present in Nelson, Marlborough, Westland otherwise only around Christchurch and Lake Ellesmere. On the Chatham Islands known from one place—here it is possibly introduced. Otherwise found throughout the world.

HABITAT

Coastal to montane (up to 300 m a.s.l.). Mostly in standing water, growing in brackish or freshwater systems such as lakes, ponds, lagoons, river and stream margins. Also found well inland around geothermal systems.

GENUS

Schoenoplectus

FAMILY

Cyperaceae

AUTHORITY

Schoenoplectus tabernaemontani (C.C.Gmel.) Palla



Schoenoplectus tabernaemontanii.

Photographer: John Barkla, Licence: CC BY.



Nuts with hypogynous bristles. Pauatahanui Inlet. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 22/03/2009, Licence: CC BY.

SYNONYMS

Schoenoplectus validus (Vahl) Á.Löve & D.Löve. In the past New Zealand plants have been erroneously referred to *Scirpus lacustris* L. and *Schoenoplectus lacustris* (L) Palla.

ENDEMIC TAXON

No

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

November–January

FRUITING

January–May

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from fresh seed and the division of whole plants. An important and valuable plant for treating effluent and other polluted water, and so now widely used in artificial wetlands for this purpose.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

OBL: Obligate Wetland

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

CULTURAL USE/IMPORTANCE

The culms were occasionally used by Māori along with the korari of the flax (*Phormium tenax* J.R.Forst. et G.Forst) to make rafts, and as a flooring in waka.

NVS CODE

SCHTAB

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 42

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Auckland: 2025 | Regionally Not Threatened | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT 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/schoenoplectus-tabernaemontani/>

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