



Spinifex sericeus

Common Name(s):

Spinifex, kowhangatara

Current Threat Status (2012):

Not Threatened

Distribution:

Indigenous. Common throughout New Zealand. Also present in Australia

Habitat:

Strictly coastal where it is confined to sandy beaches. This is the main dune forming indigenous plant in New Zealand. It is usually found at the front of actively accumulating foredunes. It does not tolerate stable dune systems and does not compete well with other introduced dune plants.

Features*:

Stoloniferous, often forming colonies stretching to 80-(160) m along sand dunes, with much-branched, knotted, rope-like, hard, creeping culms. Leaf-sheath leathery, strongly-nerved, silky-hairy. Ligule minute, ciliate, hairs very dense to 6 mm. Leaf-blade c.300 mm, inrolled and c.1.5 mm diameter, leathery, strongly nerved, silky-villous. Culm 2.5-6.0 mm diameter, internodes glabrous, silky-villous below inflorescence. Dioecious: male inflorescence with numerous pedunculate racemes, 0-120 mm, bearing up to 15 silky-villous spikelets, each terminated by a short bristle c.10 mm; raceme clusters subtended by spathaceous bracts iŪ raceme. Male spikelets 100 mm; glumes iŪ spikelet, 7-9-nerved; lemmas similar to glumes but less villous, 5-nerved; each floret with 2 emarginate lodicules 0.6 x 0.3 mm, and 3 pollen-filled anthers to 6 mm. Female inflorescence very conspicuous, globular, appearing spiny with strict bracts to 150 mm, disarticulating from culm at maturity and wheeling along sand; spikelets solitary, hidden at base of bract, 15-18 mm; glumes equal to spikelet, 5-7-nerved, silky-villous; lemmas shorter, less villous, rather chartaceous, 3-5-nerved; lower floret sterile; upper floret female, larger, with 2 lodicules c.1 x 1 mm, and 3 stamens with stout filaments bearing white, pollen less anthers up to 1.5 mm; ovary 1.5-2.0 mm, stigma-styles 17-20 mm; seed free, c. 4.5-5.0 x 2.5 mm.

Flowering:

September - December

Fruiting:

November - May

Threats:

Not Threatened

*Attribution:

Description adapted from Edgar and Connor (2000).

References and further reading:

Edgar, E.; Connor H.E. 2000: Flora of New Zealand. Vol. 5. Landcare Research, Christchurch.

Gardner, R. 1999. *Spinifex sericeus* in Auckland. Auckland Botanical Society Journal, 54: 36

For more information, visit:

http://nzpcn.org.nz/flora_details.asp?ID=2266



Caption: Hermaphrodite head. Castlecliff Beach, Whanganui. Feb 2013.

Photographer: Colin Ogle



Caption: Mt Maunganui

Photographer: Jesse Bythell