

Carex muelleri

COMMON NAME

Mueller's sedge

SYNONYMS

Carex viridis Petrie

FAMILY

Cyperaceae

AUTHORITY

Carex muelleri Petrie

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Sedges

NVS CODE

CARMUE

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

$2n = c.70$

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Not Threatened

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Sparse

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. South Island, in the east from Marlborough (upper Wairau River) to Otago.

HABITAT

A species of upper montane river flat, lake margin and shallow tarn habitats within tussock grassland. It seems to prefer seasonally wet habitats.



Carex muelleri. Photographer: John Barkla, Licence: CC BY.



Nevis Valley, Otago. Photographer: John Barkla, Licence: CC BY.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Rhizomatous; pale yellow-green, whitish-green to green tufted and swarding sedge. **Rhizome** 2–3 mm diameter, rather woody, covered in closely sheathing brown scales. **Culms** stiffly erect, 60–450 × 0.5–1 mm, > leaves, terete, flattened or plano-convex above, terete below, rather wiry, glabrous; basal sheaths dark grey-brown or reddish brown. **Leaves** 80–350 × 0.5–15 mm, plano-convex or with the upper surface slightly concave, lamina grooved along back, flattened near tip, occasionally scabrid along the margins. **Inflorescences** almost dioecious, with plants either mostly male or female; males with sparse female flowers near inflorescence apex, females with males in the same position. **Inflorescence** an erect, linear, continuous, compound spike 15–40 × 4 mm. **Spikes** 5–10, more or less contiguous, pale, straw-coloured to almost grey-green. **Subtending bracts** glume-like, rather long-awned, though not > inflorescence. **Glumes** more or less the same length as the utricles, linear-lanceolate, acuminate or awned, rather membranous to chartaceous, pale green to pale brown or hyaline. **Utricles** 3.5–4.5 × 1–1.2 mm, plano-convex, narrow-lanceolate, strongly nerved on the flat face; beak 1.5–2 mm long, tapering, with finely scabrid wings and an oblique, bifid orifice; stipe 0.5–1 mm, hardly contracted. **Stigmas** 2. **Nut** c. 2 mm long, brown, oblong-obovoid, smooth, glossy.

SIMILAR TAXA

A very distinctive species easily recognized by its rather tall whitish-green, yellow-green to green tufted culms and leaves, creeping habit, and narrowly erect almost dioecious inflorescences. It is perhaps most similar to *C. kaloides* Petrie which differs by its greater stature, orange yellow, reddish-yellow to orange culms and leaves, longer, often paniculate inflorescence and broader, larger, rather more finely nerved utricles.

FLOWERING

October–January

FRUITING

October–June

LIFE CYCLE

Nuts surrounded by inflated utricles are dispersed by granivory and wind (Thorsen et al., 2009).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown by division of whole plants and fresh seed. Because plants are virtually dioecious seed may be difficult to obtain. An attractive and unusual sedge form rigidly erect greenish white swards. Ideal for cultivation around garden ponds or slow flowing streams, provided it is planted in sunny conditions and kept free from competition.

THREATS

A biologically sparse, naturally uncommon species. In some parts of its range it may be declining due to competition from weeds.

ETYMOLOGY

carex: Latin name for a species of sedge, now applied to the whole group.

muelleri: Named after Baron Ferdinand von Mueller, 19th century German/Australian botanist and founder of the National Herbarium of Victoria

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.

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/carex-muelleri/>