

Carex ventosa

COMMON NAME

Chatham Islands forest sedge

SYNONYMS

Carex McClurgii Petrie

FAMILY

Cyperaceae

AUTHORITY

Carex ventosa C.B.Clarke

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Sedges

NVS CODE

CARVEN

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = c.62-64

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: IE, RR

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: IE, RR

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: IE

2004 | Range Restricted

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic, Chatham Islands where it is known from Chatham (Rekohu), Pitt, Mangere, Little Mangere, South East, Star Keys and Rabbit Islands.

HABITAT

A widespread sedge of Chatham Island lowland forest. Not found in deep peat and mainly associated with dune forests, coastal forests and tall scrub.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACU: Facultative Upland

Occasionally is a hydrophyte but usually occurs in uplands (non-wetlands).



Chatham Islands. Photographer: Peter J. de Lange, Licence: CC BY-NC.



In cultivation. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 19/07/2007, Licence: CC BY.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Stout, rather leafy, shortly-rhizomatous, tussock forming sedge of forested places and well drained soils. **Rhizomes** erect, rather short, up to 20 mm wide; loosely covered in fibrous leaf-sheath remnants. **Culms** 0.45–1–(1.5) m × 1–2.5–4 mm, trigonous, mostly smooth though scabrid below inflorescence. **Basal sheaths** brown. **Leaves** ≥ culms, 5–11 mm wide, double-folded, pale green to light glaucous green, margins finely scabrid. **Inflorescence** 0.2–0.5–1 m long of 7–15 spikes, these either approximate or the lowermost 1–4 distant, occasionally compound, pedunculate; terminal 1–4 spikes male; remaining spikes female, rarely with a few male flowers near their apices, 20–45–60 × 6–8–10 mm. **Glumes** (excluding awn) ≤ utricles, ovate, acute or truncate, membranous with numerous, distinct nerves, colourless (hyaline) except for red-brown striations, and occasional larger dark red-brown markings beside the green midrib; awn scabrid up to 2 mm long. **Utricles** 4.5–5 × 1.5–2 mm, subtrigonous, ellipsoid, distinctly nerved, light greenish brown, margins quite glabrous; beak narrow bifid, c. 1 mm long, crura slightly scabrid; stipe minute. **Stigmas** 3. **Nut** 2 mm long, dark brown, trigonous, oblong.

SIMILAR TAXA

Of the three other wide-leaved carices on the Chathams (*C. trifida* Cav., *C. ternaria* Boott in Hook.f., and *C. chathamica* Petrie), *C. ventosa* is perhaps most likely to be confused in the field with *C. trifida*. Ecologically, *C. trifida* is a strictly coastal species frequenting seal haulouts and seabird breeding grounds and roosts, however, in some sites it overlaps with *C. ventosa*, and in such situations rare hybrids have been recorded (these may generally be recognised by their near sterile condition). From *C. ventosa*, *C. trifida* differs in its usually much wider (6–20 mm) dark glaucous leaves, shorter, more sturdy culms and usually larger and broader spikelets (35–50 × 6–15 mm). The glumes of *C. trifida* are consistently emarginated rather than acute, ovate or truncate as in *C. ventosa*. Herbarium specimens of *C. ventosa* have been confused with the peat-bog dwelling *C. chathamica*. From that species *C. ventosa* differs by the near colourless (hyaline) rather than evenly light red-brown coloured glumes, which are of equal length rather than exceeding the length of the utricles. The utricles of *C. ventosa* are more distinctly nerved and beaked than those of *C. chathamica*.

FLOWERING

September–January

FRUITING

October–May

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 from fresh seed. An attractive sedge ideal for semi-shaded to shaded situations under tall trees or around buildings. Some selection is warranted as some wild populations seen have particularly glaucous foliage.

THREATS

A common, widespread island endemic. It is not threatened on the Chatham Islands.

ETYMOLOGY

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

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (10 August 2006). 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.

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/carex-ventosa/>