Carex allanii

COMMON NAMES
Allan's sedge

BIOSTATUS
Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | Not Assessed
Jump to previous conservation statuses

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Sedges

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Rhizomatous sedge, forming diffuse matted patches. **Rhizomes** up to 0.5 mm diameter. **Leaf-sheaths** red-brown, grooved. **Leaves** 2–4 = or slightly < culms, 0.2 mm wide, concavo-convex to plano(flat)-convex above, margins slightly scabrid (with teeth) towards tip. **Inflorescence** a solitary spike of tightly clustered flowers; female flowers 1–2, male flowers in a spikelet 3–4 mm long. **Glumes**: Lowermost female glume bract-like; upper female glume 3–4 mm long, acute, red-brown, midrib green, extending to a fine scabrid spine 0.5 mm long. **Utricles** 3–3.5 × 1 mm, somewhat 3-angled (trigonous), ovoid, with 2 lateral nerves, beak 1 mm long with scabrid margins and oblique orifice (beak fragile and easily lost from specimens). **Stigmas** 3. **Nut** < 2 mm long, obovoid, 3-angled.



Mount Arthur (from a specimen collected by Graeme Jane). Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 23/10/2007, Licence: CC BY.

SIMILAR TAXA
Carex allanii is similar to *C. acicularis* and *C. enysii* and differs from both species by its rhizomatous habit, very slender leaves and few (1–3) widely-spaced flowers. At first glance this species has the appearance of the exotic grass *Festuca rubra* subsp. *rubra*, it is only on closer inspection that the inconspicuous flowers are seen near the leaf tip.

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic to the South Island. Known only from the Old Man Range and several sites on the flanks of the Central Otago block mountains. Specimens are needed to substantiate a 2004 report from the Arthur Range, NW Nelson. Pictures of these plants (above) appear to be similar to *Carex enysii*.



Mount Arthur (from a specimen collected by Graeme Jane). Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 23/10/2007, Licence: CC BY.

HABITAT
A shade-requiring sedge usually found at the base of rocky bluffs.

THREATS
Carex allanii, described in 1962, is known with certainty only from a handful of herbarium specimens. It may be genuinely uncommon, though it was collected once by accident in the mid 1990s (P.B. Heenan pers. comm.) suggesting it might also simply be overlooked. Until further field work is undertaken and backed up by good herbarium specimens, the exact status, and degree of threat (if any) this species faces will remain unresolved. This is why it has been assessed as Data Deficient. At sites where it is currently known it appears intolerant of competition from grasses such as *Festuca rubra*.

GENUS
Carex

FAMILY
Cyperaceae

AUTHORITY
Carex allanii Hamlin

SYNONYMS
None

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
?–November–December–?

FRUITING
?–November–December–?

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

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Easily grown by division. Fresh seed should germinate readily.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING
FACW: Facultative Wetland
Usually is a hydrophyte but occasionally found in uplands (non-wetlands).

ETYMOLOGY
carex: Latin name for a species of sedge, now applied to the whole group.
allanii: After Dr Harry Howard Barton Allan C.B.E. (1882–1957) one time school teacher, then first director of DSIR Botany Division, and 'sole' author of Flora I, the first in the former DSIR Botany Division flora series.

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY
Key to indigenous and naturalised Carex in New Zealand

NVS CODE
CARALL

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DP, Sp
2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DP
2004 | Data Deficient
Jump to current conservation status

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES
Otago: 2025 | Regionally Data Deficient | Qualifiers: TL Help
The regional threat classification system leverages off the national assessments in the NZTCS, providing information relevant for the regional context. Otago conservation status information is sourced from the "Conservation Status of Indigenous Vascular Plants in Otago, 2025" Jarvie S 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.
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.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared by P.J. de Lange (10 August 2006). Description adapted from Moore and Edgar (1970)
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MORE INFORMATION

https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/carex-allanii/

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