

Carex breviculmis

COMMON NAMES

grassland sedge

BIOSTATUS

Native

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Sedges

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Shortly rhizomatous; tufted sedge usually forming low-growing, close-packed, bright green patches. **Culms** hidden among leaves, usually 10–20 mm long; basal sheaths dull brown. **Leaves** much > culms, 1.5–3.0 mm wide, grass-like, recurved, channelled, margins exceedingly finely and closely scabrid almost throughout. **Spikes** 2–5, approximate, pale green; terminal spike male, usually sessile; remaining spikes female, occasionally with a few male flowers at the top, 6–9 mm long, ± pedunculate, clustered round base of male spike; subtending bracts leaf-like, very narrow-linear, the uppermost almost filiform, margins finely scabrid. **Glumes** > utricles, ovate, pale green, almost white, membranous, midrib green, stiff, thickened, produced to a stout, finely hispid awn. **Utricles** c. 2.5 × 1.0 mm, biconvex or subtrigonal, fusiform, pale yellow-green, faintly many-nerved, pubescent all over; beak slightly narrowed, pale green, c. 0.5 mm long, orifice ± truncate; stipe c. 0.3 mm long, often much contracted. **Stigmas** 3. **Nut** c. 1.5 mm long, obtusely trigonal, oblong, obovoid, light brown, surmounted by a minute, persistent, dilated style-base.

SIMILAR TAXA

Carex breviculmis is one of the earliest flowering New Zealand species and is immediately recognised by its pale green, faintly nerved, pubescent utricles.

DISTRIBUTION

.Indigenous, North and South Islands. Also Australia, New Guinea, Lord Howe and Norfolk Islands

HABITAT

Coastal to montane. Usually in open grassland, gum land scrub, clay pans, on rock stacks, and talus slopes and other similar sparsely vegetated sites.

GENUS

Carex

FAMILY

Cyperaceae

AUTHORITY

Carex breviculmis R.Br.



Growing in partial shade. Mangatoetoe Stream, Palliser Bay. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 02/10/2010, Licence: CC BY.



Cass, Canterbury. Photographer: Jane Gosden, Date taken: 11/02/2007, Licence: CC BY-NC-SA.

SYNONYMS

None

ENDEMIC TAXON

No

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

August–December

FRUITING

October–May

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

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

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from fresh seed and by division of established plants. In ideal conditions this species sometimes naturalises in urban areas but it is never invasive. Tolerant of a wide range of conditions except permanently waterlogged soils. However does best in full sun in a free draining soil.

ETYMOLOGY

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

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

[Key to indigenous and naturalised Carex in New Zealand](#)

NVS CODE

CARBRE

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = c.64

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 At Risk – Regionally Declining | Qualifiers: DPR, DPS, DPT, PF, SO 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.

Otago: 2025 | Regionally Not Threatened 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 (110 August 2006). Description adapted from Moore and Edgar (1970)
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MORE INFORMATION

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

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