

Carex buchananii

COMMON NAME

Buchanan's sedge, cutty grass

SYNONYMS

Carex tenax Bergg., *Carex lucida* Boott var. *buchanani* (Bergg.) Kük.

FAMILY

Cyperaceae

AUTHORITY

Carex buchananii Bergg.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Sedges

NVS CODE

CARBUC

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 60

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: DP

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: North Island (uncommon, known only from scattered sites south of the Manawatu. Naturalised in Auckland City.), South Island (more widespread and at times locally common, though often sporadically distributed, and apparently absent from Westland and Fiordland. Scarce in Southland). Recorded as naturalised in the United Kingdom.

HABITAT

Coastal to montane (up to 1000 m a.s.l.). On beaches, lagoon, lake and stream margins, or in damp ground within open forest or short tussock grassland.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FAC: Facultative

Commonly occurs as either a hydrophyte or non-hydrophyte (non-wetlands).



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



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DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Densely tufted, strict, reddish brown, rarely yellow-green, sedge arising from an ascending rhizome c. 3 mm diameter. **Culms** 70–900 × 0.5–1.5 mm. erect, rarely elongating to 1.2 m and becoming prostrate, semiterete, smooth and shining, basal sheaths dark red-purple, almost black. Leaves = or slightly > culms, c.1.0–1.5 mm wide, plano-convex, often semiterete, erect, wiry, linear, gradually narrowed and flattened towards the acute, occasionally cirrhose apices, smooth and shining, reddish or green on the back, upper surface matt, pale cream, margins scaberulous towards the base, more strongly serrulate towards the tip, sheath not much broader than lamina and of similar texture, with finely membranous margins. **Spikes** 5–6, silvery, distant, or the upper spikes approximate, sessile or the lowest slightly pedunculate; uppermost 1–(2) spikes male, cylindrical; lower spikes female, 5–30 × 3–4 mm., oblong, occasionally with a few male flowers at the base; bracts subtending lower spikes lf-like, much > inflorescence. **Glumes** (excluding awn) < or = utricles, ovate, acute, white and membranous, with a stronger midrib and long scabrid awn. **Utricles** 2.5–3.0 mm long, slightly > 1 mm wide, plano-convex, elliptic-ovoid, pale cream at the base with dark brown to purple-black splotches above or occasionally entirely pale green, faintly nerved, margins scabrid above, abruptly narrowed to a pale slender, recurved, deeply bifid beak, 0.5–1.0 mm long, margins ciliate-serrate, orifice scabrid, stipe minute. **Stigmas** 2. **Nut** c. 1.5 mm, long, plano-convex to almost biconvex, obovoid, tapering towards the base, brown.

SIMILAR TAXA

A very distinct and singular species easily recognised by the mostly reddish brown culms and leaves, rather tall, stiffly erect tufted habit, plano-convex often semiterete leaves, membranous, colourless glumes and usually dark-coloured utricles. The scabrid-beaked utricles resemble those of *Carex albula* Allan and *C. comans* Bergg., much smaller species from which *C. buchananii* differs by its taller, stiffly erect culms and leaves, and two rather than three stigmas.

FLOWERING

October–December

FRUITING

November–June

LIFE CYCLE

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

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from fresh seed and by the division of whole plants. Will tolerate most conditions, but does best in full sun in a permanently damp soil. In ideal conditions this species often naturalises, and it can at times become invasive. Next to *C. comans*, this is one of the most commonly cultivated indigenous sedges.

ETYMOLOGY

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

buchananii: Named after John Buchanan (13 October 1819–1898) who was a New Zealand botanist and scientific artist and fellow of the Linnean Society.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared 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. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ppees.2009.06.001>.

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

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