

Carex cyanea

COMMON NAMES

hook sedge

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: Sp, DPT

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Sedges

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Rather stout, wiry, densely tufted, glaucous to dark green plants. **Culms** 300–700 mm long, < 1 mm diameter, initially distinctly scabrid above, becoming faintly so when mature; lower basal sheaths dark brown, uppermost sheath bright pink above. **Leaves** 1–3 per culm, < culms, usually c. 1 mm wide and involute, rarely up to 2 mm wide and flat, scabrid on the margins and upper surface. **Spikes** 40–150 × 2–3 mm, female flowers c. 10–20–(26), distant, internodes up to 15 mm long at base of spike, decreasing to 4 mm long above. **Glumes** < utricles, persistent, ± obtuse, subcoriaceous, or membranous, midrib conspicuous, green, remainder hyaline, colourless or red-tinged. **Utricles** 5–7 × c. 1 mm, plano-convex, oblong, nerved on the dorsal side, scarcely stipitate, very slightly narrowed to a scabrid beak slightly < 2 mm long.

SIMILAR TAXA

The scabrid utricles and lax-flowered inflorescences are also typical of *Carex healyi* K.A.Ford and *C. subviridis* K.A.Ford, two species which are usually found well inland in densely forested habitats. From these *Carex cyanea* differs by the narrow, inrolled usually glaucous leaves. The uppermost leaf-sheath of *Carex cyanea* is pinkish coloured like *C. erythrovaginata* K.A.Ford. However that species differs by the glabrous utricles and wider, usually flat leaves. *Carex cyanea* could also be confused with *C. strictissima* (Kük.) K.A.Ford which has red-coloured sheaths, however, that species has a very distinctive rush like growth habit.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: North Island (southern third only), South Island (mostly eastern, as far south as Dunedin, very scarce in the west).

HABITAT

Mostly coastal, in open forest and scrub, rarely bordering wetlands and saltmarsh.

GENUS

Carex

FAMILY

Cyperaceae

AUTHORITY

Carex cyanea K.A.Ford



Makara, Wellington. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 23/04/2014, Licence: CC BY.



In cultivation ex Makara, Wellington. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Licence: CC BY.

SYNONYMS

Uncinia leptostachya Raoul

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

October–November–(December)

FRUITING

November–July

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from fresh seed and by division of established plants. Prefers a permanently moist, peaty soil but will grow in most substrates. Best in semi-shade.

WHERE TO BUY

Not Commercially Available

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

CARCYA

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 88

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: DP, Sp

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Otago: 2025 | Regionally Threatened – Regionally Critical | Qualifiers: DPR, NR, NS, OL 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.

ATTRIBUTION

Description adapted from Moore and Edgar (1970). Fact sheet prepared by Peter J. de Lange 17 August 2006. Some of this factsheet information is derived from [Flora of New Zealand Online](#) and is used under a [Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 New Zealand](#) licence.

MORE INFORMATION

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

