

Carex divulsa

COMMON NAMES

grey sedge

BIOSTATUS

Exotic

CONSERVATION STATUS

Not applicable

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Sedges

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Dense grass-like, dark green tussock, up to 50 cm tall, with longer flower spikes, the spikes are made up of small groups of small green flowers on a thin arching stem. (Despite its common name, plants in NZ are mid-green to yellow green, not grey.)

FLOWER COLOURS

Brown, Green

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Dense, dark-green to yellow-green, deeply rooted grass-like tussock-forming sedge. **Rhizome** thick, short, ascending with dark brown scales soon becoming fibrous. **Stems** 0.15–1.8 m high, slender and wiry, 3-angled, scabrid on angles. **Leaves** 2–3 mm wide, < stems, flat to channelled, rather harshly scabrid, sheaths dull, light creamy-brown. **Inflorescence** 50–120 mm long, often with 1–2 very short branches at base; spikes \pm 10, sessile, light green, distant below, 3–5 uppermost more crowded; bracts filiform, the lowest much longer than the spikes. **Spikes** few-flowered, androgynous, male flowers at top. **Glumes** much < utricles, ovate, acuminate, colourless-hyaline with a green midrib. **Utricles** 4–5 \times \pm 2 mm, ovate, plano-convex, nerveless, light brown, tapering to a short bifid beak with scabrid margins, stipe minute. **Stigmas** 2. **Nut** obovoid, biconvex.

SIMILAR TAXA

The mixed-sex flower spikes resemble those of the native *C. virgata* and *C. secta*, but *C. divulsa* is much smaller and the leaf margins are not cutting. The elongated bracts that subtend the lowest spikes in *C. divulsa* are not evident in *C. virgata* or *C. secta*.

DISTRIBUTION

Scattered throughout the North Island and Nelson, Marlborough and Canterbury; Chatham Islands.

HABITAT

Widespread from the coast to subalpine situations. Usually found as a pasture and lawn weed with a distinct preference for calcareous or other base-rich substrates. Will colonise forest especially forest margins and gaps. A serious weed in native vegetation.

GENUS

Carex

FAMILY

Cyperaceae



Whanganui. Nov 2011. Photographer: Colin C. Ogle, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Auckland. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 26/10/2007, Licence: CC BY.

AUTHORITY

Carex divulsa Stokes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

Late spring

FRUITING

Summer

YEAR NATURALISED

1883

ORIGIN

Europe, North Asia, North Africa

REASON FOR INTRODUCTION

Ornamental plant

TOLERANCES

Cold and drought tolerant—can tolerate a wide range of soils types.

CONTROL TECHNIQUES

Not difficult to hand-pull - take the plants (or at least the seed heads) away and destroy them. Not often controlled in New Zealand, but is being targeted in some reserves.

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

Long-lived perennial sedge. Seed dispersed by contaminated machinery or garden discards.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FAC: Facultative

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

ETYMOLOGY

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

ENVIRONMENTAL WEED (2024)

This plant is named in a list of 386 environmental weeds in New Zealand 2024 prepared by DOC. 759 candidate species were considered for inclusion on this new comprehensive list of environmental weeds in New Zealand. The species considered were drawn from published lists of weed species, lists of plants that must be reported or managed by law if observed, existing national and regional programmes and agreements for pest management, and species already managed by the Department of Conservation (DOC). Candidate species were then assessed to see if they were fully naturalised and whether they have more than minor impacts in natural ecosystems. Read the full report [here](#).

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

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

NVS CODE

CARDIV

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Champion P. et al. 2020. Freshwater Invasive Species of New Zealand 2020. NIWA publication.

<https://docs.niwa.co.nz/library/public/FreInSpec.pdf>

Healy AJ, Edgar E. 1980. Flora of New Zealand, Volume III. Adventive Cyperaceous, Petalous and Spathaceous Monocotyledons. Government Printer, Wellington, NZ. 220 p.

Johnson PN, Brooke PA. 1989. Wetland plants in New Zealand. DSIR Field Guide, DSIR Publishing, Wellington, NZ. 319 p.

ATTRIBUTION

Factsheet prepared by Paul Champion and Deborah Hofstra (NIWA).

MORE INFORMATION

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

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08 June 2026