

# Carex echinata

## COMMON NAMES

star sedge

## BIOSTATUS

Native

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

## CATEGORY

Vascular

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Sedges

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Loosely tufted from an ascending rhizome; tufts ± flaccid. **Culms** 35–350 × c. 0.5 mm, subtrigonus, glabrous; basal sheaths grey or light brown.

**Leaves** usually < culms, 0.5–1.5 mm wide, channelled to flat, margins scabrid, tapering towards the subacute tip. **Inflorescence** a compound spike 15–40 mm long, green or pale brown, of 3–5 ± distant spikes, utricles widely spreading when ripe and individual spikes star-shaped; lowest spike usually subtended by a filiform scabrid bract c. ½ length of inflorescence. **Spikes** androgynous, 3–7 mm long, male flowers at the base of each spike; plants occasionally almost dioecious. **Glume** c. ½ length of utricle, membranous, light brown, with a pale cream or green well-marked midrib and hyaline margins. **Utricles** 2.5–4.0 × c. 1.5 mm, plano-convex, usually distinctly nerved; contracted above to a narrow, dark brown beak with green, slightly or distinctly scabrid margins and slightly bifid orifice; puckered below to a rather indistinct stipe c. 2 mm long. **Stigmas** 2. **Nut** slightly < 2 mm long, ± biconvex, oblong-ovoid, pale brown.

## SIMILAR TAXA

A distinctive species that is easily recognised by the star-shaped arrangement of the mature spreading utricles. This is clearly seen when the plants are viewed from above. *Carex echinata* has no obvious close relatives in New Zealand and is unlikely to be confused with any of the introduced or indigenous species known from this country.

## DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. New Zealand: North, South and South Islands from about Te Moehau south. Apparently absent from Marlborough.

## HABITAT

Coastal to alpine (though mainly montane to alpine in northern part of range). Common in wetlands such as bogs and mires or on stream banks and around tarn margins. Descending to sea level in the south-west of the South Island and on Stewart Island.

## GENUS

Carex

## FAMILY

Cyperaceae



Herbarium specimen: AK 289631.

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Herbarium specimen: AK 289631.

Photographed with permission of Auckland

## AUTHORITY

Carex echinata Murr.

## SYNONYMS

Carex stellulata Good.; Carex stellulata Good. var. australis Kük.

## ENDEMIC TAXON

No

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## FLOWERING

October–December

## FRUITING

November–July (often present throughout the year)

## LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

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

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easy from fresh seed and the division of whole plants. Prefers moist soils, with a sunny aspect, free from weeds.

## WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

OBL: Obligate Wetland

Almost always is a hydrophyte, rarely in uplands (non-wetlands).

## WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available.

## ETYMOLOGY

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

**echinata**: From the Latin 'echinus' for hedgehog, meaning armed with spines.

## MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

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

## NVS CODE

CARECH

## CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = c.58

## 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

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 (10 August 2006). Description adapted from Moore and Edgar (1970) 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-echinata/>

## PDF DATE

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