

Carex edura

COMMON NAMES

bastard grass, hook sedge

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Sedges

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Laxly tufted or shortly rhizomatous dark yellowish green or orange-green plants. **Rhizome** 1–2 mm. diameter. **Culms** 10–400 × 0.5–2.0 mm, erect or ascending, rigid, cartilaginous, subtrigonus, glabrous; basal bracts dull yellow-brown or darker brown. **Leaves** 4–12 per culm, usually < mature culms but occasionally ≥ culms, 1.5–4.0 mm wide, rather soft to coriaceous, dark yellowish green, scabrid on margins. **Spikes** 10–45 × 4–10 mm, female flowers numerous, densely crowded, internodes almost all equal, 0.5–1.0 mm long. **Glumes** occasionally > utricles in lower part of spike, ≤ utricles above, deciduous, subulate or ovate, obtuse to subacute, membranous, hyaline, or light to dark brown and opaque, midrib green with the 3 nerves not very conspicuous, midrib of 1–3 lowest glumes often scabrid and occasionally prolonged in lowermost glume to a scabrid awn. **Utricles** 3.5–5.0 × 1.0–1.5 mm, trigonous or subtrigonus with conspicuous lateral nerves, greenish brown to dark brown, widely spreading when ripe, contracted below to a broad stipe c. 1 mm long, beak 1.0–1.5 mm long.

SIMILAR TAXA

Carex edura is a widespread and variable species. Of the New Zealand species, it is most likely to be confused with *C. drucei* (Hamlin) K.A.Ford, *C. horizontalis* (Colenso) K.A.Ford and possibly *C. crispa* K.A.Ford. From *Carex edura*, *C. drucei* differs by the widely spreading, stoloniferous rather than tufted or shortly rhizomatous growth habit; usually more numerous, much narrower, grass-like, soft rather than harshly scabrid leaves, and by the shorter, oblong rather than broadly pyramidal spikes, with smaller dark-brown rather than green-brown to dark brown glossy utricles. *Carex horizontalis* differs by the dark yellowish green to reddish green rather than bright green leaves and culms. It also differs by its fewer flowered spikelets and green to grey-brown, dull rather than green-brown to dark brown glossy utricles. *Carex crispa* is easily distinguished by its much narrower, stiffly erect grass-like involute leaves with twisted/curled (cirrhose) leaf rather than straight apices.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand, North Island (from the Raukumara Range south), South Island and Campbell Island/Motu Ihupuku.

HABITAT

Montane to alpine. A species of open forest, scrub, tussock grassland, herbfield, mires, bogs and river beds. Also common on ultramafic soils.



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GENUS

Carex

FAMILY

Cyperaceae

AUTHORITY

Carex edura K.A.Ford

SYNONYMS

Uncinia divaricata Boott; Uncinia compacta R.Br. var. divaricata (Boott) Hook.f.; Uncinia clarkii Petrie; Uncinia compacta R.Br. var. petriei C.b. Clarke; Uncinia compacta R.Br. var. clarkei (Petrie) Kük.; Uncinia divaricata Boott var. petriei (C.B.Clarke) Hamlin

TAXONOMIC NOTES

Carex edura is extremely variable and would repay further critical taxonomic study.

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

October–November

FRUITING

November–May

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Very easy from divisions of whole plants and from seed. Does best when planted in full sun in a fertile, free draining but moist soil. Excellent in pots.

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.

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

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

NVS CODE

CAREDR

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 88

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Otago: 2025 | Regionally Not Threatened | Qualifiers: TL 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

Fact sheet prepared by Peter J. de Lange 17 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-edura/>

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