

Carex elingamita

COMMON NAMES

Three Kings sedge

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: CD, IE

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Sedges

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Rather leafy, light to dark green, tussock forming sedge of shaded forested slopes and boulder field. **Culms** up to 1 m × 1.5 mm, trigonous, smooth; basal bracts light brown. Leaves < culms, 5–10 mm wide, double folded, margins finely scabrid. **Inflorescence** of 10–12 compound or simple green to grey-green spikes, 60–80 × 5 mm, the lower 2–4 more or less distant on long erect peduncles; terminal spike male, remaining spikes female below with upper $\frac{1}{3}$ or more male. **Glumes** equal or < utricles, linear-lanceolate, membranous (somewhat chaffy when old) with red-brown flecks, truncate or almost emarginated, midrib prolonged as a rigid, strongly scabrid awn. **Utricles** 4–4.5 mm long, trigonous, elliptic-lanceolate, strongly nerved, erect or slightly recurved, membranous, grey-green, margins glabrous, beak slightly > 1.5 mm long, margins glabrous, crura scabrid not oblique. **Stigmas** 3. **Nut** 2 mm long, red-brown.

SIMILAR TAXA

As the only wide-leaved sedge present on the Three Kings field recognition is unlikely to be difficult. However as it is now commonly cultivated and has naturalised in at least Auckland City, distinction from the allied *C. kermadecensis* Petrie, *C. forsteri* Wahl. and *C. spinirostris* Colenso is necessary. From *C. kermadecensis*, *C. elingamita* is best distinguished by the lowermost spikes being male in the upper $\frac{1}{3}$ or more of their length (rather than entirely female), utricles 4–4.5 mm, rather than 3.5–4 mm long, and by the red-brown rather than dark brown nut. From *C. forsteri*, *C. elingamita* differs by its much smaller stature, and by the crura which is never oblique. *Carex spinirostris* though similar in stature differs by the distinctly pendulous, red-purple rather than suberect to erect, green to grey-green spikes, and by the utricles which are pale grey to bright red in their upper third, rather than uniformly grey green.

DISTRIBUTION

.Endemic. Three Kings Island group where it is present on Great (Manawa Tawhi), North East, South West, West Islands and at least Hinemoa Rock in the Princes group. Naturalised in Auckland City

HABITAT

A species of shaded sites under dense forest, often around petrel burrowed ground, boulder falls and rubble.

THREATS

Not threatened and very common but listed because it occupies a small geographic range.



Carex elingamita. Photographer: Peter J de Lange, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Male and female spikelets. Photographer: Peter J de Lange, Licence: CC BY-NC.

GENUS

Carex

FAMILY

Cyperaceae

AUTHORITY

Carex elingamita Hamlin

SYNONYMS

None

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

September–December

FRUITING

October–May

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, Can become invasive. Prefers a semi-shaded site but will tolerate full sun. Can be grown in a wide range of soils. Frost and cold sensitive.

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

CARELI

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = c.60

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: CD, IE

2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: CD, IE

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: RC, IE

2004 | Range Restricted

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Northland: 2026 | Regionally At Risk – Regionally Naturally Uncommon Help

Current regional threat status assessments prepared according to Crisp et al. (2025) are displayed when available.

The Northland conservation status information is sourced from the [“Conservation status of indigenous vascular plants in Northland | Taitokerau”](#) Ford et al. 2026 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

Description adapted from Moore and Edgar (1970)

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MORE INFORMATION

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

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