Carex filamentosa

COMMON NAMES
Stewart Island sedge

BIOSTATUS
Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: Sp, DPS, DPT, RR
Jump to previous conservation statuses

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Sedges

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Rather densely tufted stoloniferous, pale green to reddish green sedge. **Culms** 30–120 × 0.5 mm, terete, faintly striated. **Leaves** up to twice the length of the culms, 0.5–1 mm wide, plano-convex, nerved on the under surface, smooth on the upper, rather finely scabrid toward the apex. **Inflorescence** of 2–4 spikes; these crowded toward the top of the culm, usually with at least some of the lowermost distant. **Spikes**: uppermost spike rather slender, male; remaining spikes mainly female, shortly pedunculate, rarely with some male flowers toward the top. **Bracts subtending spikes** long, filiform and leaf-like. **Glumes** < or sometimes = to utricles, ovate, chartaceous to membranous, pale cream, brown- or red-flecked, midrib distinct extended as a smooth finely scabrid awn. **Utricles** 2.5–3 × 1.5 mm, plano-convex or subtrigonous, elliptic-lanceolate, light brown with reddish brown markings towards the beak, distinctly nerved; beak slightly narrowed, 0.5 mm long, margins smooth, crura finely bifid; stipe minute. **Stigmas** 3. **Nut** 1.5 mm long, red-brown, trigonous, obovoid.



Leaf tip, Table Hill, Tin Range, Rakiura, 500m elevation. Photographer: Rowan Hindmarsh-Walls, Date taken: 17/03/2017, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Mt Rakeahua. Photographer: Melissa Hutchison, Date taken: 28/01/2021, Licence: CC BY-NC.

SIMILAR TAXA
Carex filamentosa is closely allied to *C. edgariae* Hamlin, *C. libera* (Kük.) Hamlin and *C. uncifolia* Cheeseman. All are small, rhizomatous reddish green sedges with congested, approximate spikes. Of these species *C. filamentosa* is most similar to *C. uncifolia* from which it differs by its distinctly wide spreading stoloniferous rather than shortly rhizomatous habit and by the shortly pedunculate rather than sessile female spikes. From the North West Nelson endemic *C. libera*, *C. filamentosa* is distinguished by its southern South Island and Stewart Island distribution, plano-convex leaves and distinctly beaked utricles. From *C. edgariae* of inland Otago, *C. filamentosa* is readily distinguished by its distinctly beaked utricles and much narrower leaves.

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic. South Island and Stewart Island/Rakiura. In the South Island confined to Southland where scarce. Stewart Island/Rakiura locally common throughout.

HABITAT
A species of damp sites in damp ground within montane to subalpine scrub, srhubland and open grassland.

THREATS
A naturally uncommon sedge which is by and large confined to Stewart Island. It may be threatened in some parts of its Southland coastal range.

GENUS
Carex

FAMILY
Cyperaceae

AUTHORITY
Carex filamentosa Petrie

SYNONYMS
None

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
October–February

FRUITING
October–May

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

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Easily grown from division of whole plants and fresh seed. Does well in a pot or in a damp sunny site. Tolerant of most garden soils and situations. Does not like drought or excessive humidity.

PLANT OF THE MONTH
This plant has been featured as a Plant of the Month – see Trilepidea: NZPCN newsletter for April 2017 for the full story.

ETYMOLOGY
carex: Latin name for a species of sedge, now applied to the whole group.
filamentosa: Thread-like

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY
Key to indigenous and naturalised Carex in New Zealand

NVS CODE
CARFIL

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DP, RR, Sp
2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: RR, Sp
2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon
2004 | Range Restricted
Jump to current conservation status

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-filamentosa/

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