

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 subtrigonal, 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, trigonal, obovoid.

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, sedge 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.



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.

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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