Carex flaviformis

COMMON NAMES
yellow sedge

BIOSTATUS
Native

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | Not Threatened
Jump to previous conservation statuses

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Sedges

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Yellow-green to yellow, rather stiffly tufted sedge. **Culms** 50–300 × 1.0–1.5 mm, smooth, trigonous, lower half usually ensheathed by leaves; basal bracts cream to dark grey, rarely reddish. **Leaves** much > culms, 2–3 mm. wide, initially double-folded but maturing almost flat, margins and keel scabrid towards the tip with small, close-set teeth. **Inflorescence** of 3–8 yellow-green, sessile, densely crowded spikes forming a head up to 30 mm long and up to 25 mm diameter, occasionally all spikes androgynous, or terminal spike male, 10–20 mm × 1.5–2.0 mm, lateral spikes female or androgynous, upper more often androgynous, lower more often female, 6–15 × 6–8 mm.; bracts subtending inflorescence leaf-like, often overtopping the foliage leaves. **Glumes** much < utricles, oblong-ovate, obtuse, membranous, white, sometimes tinged with brown, the centre green, with white midrib not usually excurrent. **Utricles** 3.5–4.5 × c. 1.5 mm., inflated or subtrigonous, ovoid, rather bright yellow-green, spreading when mature, nerves well-marked; beak 1.0–1.5 mm long, very narrow, green, papillose, shortly bifid with scabrid orifice or almost entire; stipe minute or absent. **Stigmas** 3. **Nut** c. 1.5 mm long, trigonous with thickened angles, especially near centre of nut, obovoid, light yellow-brown.



Ahuriri Valley. Photographer: John Barkla, Licence: CC BY.



In cultivation ex Cobb Valley. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 21/10/2007, Licence: CC BY.

SIMILAR TAXA
The yellow-green to yellow leaves and yellow-green utricles immediately distinguish *Carex flaviformis* from all but the naturalised *C. demissa* Hornem. *Carex demissa* differs from *C. flaviformis* by the male spike which is shortly pedunculate rather than sessile; and by the female spikes which are not very closely clustered (rather than closely clustered) at the base of the male spike, typically with lowest rather distant.

DISTRIBUTION
Indigenous. New Zealand: North (Cape Palliser), South, Stewart and Chatham Islands. Also in Tasmania

HABITAT
Coastal to alpine (up to 1400 m a.s.l.). In the northern part of its South Island range it is usually found well inland. However in the North and Chatham Islands, and in parts of its range on Stewart Island it is mostly found in permanently damp coastal and lowland turfs often bordering slowly flowing streams and wetlands.

GENUS
Carex

FAMILY
Cyperaceae

AUTHORITY
Carex flaviformis Nelmes

SYNONYMS
None

ENDEMIC TAXON
No

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
October–January

FRUITING
December–June

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

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Easily grown from fresh seed and by division of established plants. Tolerant of a wide range of conditions but prefers full sun and permanently damp substrate. The yellowish foliage is rather attractive.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING
OBL: Obligate Wetland
Almost always is a hydrophyte, rarely in uplands (non-wetlands).

ETYMOLOGY
carex: Latin name for a species of sedge, now applied to the whole group.
flaviformis: Like a European yellow sedge

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

NVS CODE
CARFLA

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = c.64

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 At Risk – Regionally Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DPR, DPS, DPT, RR 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)
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MORE INFORMATION

https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/carex-flaviformis/

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