Carex geminata

COMMON NAMES
cutty grass, rautahi

BIOSTATUS
Native – Endemic taxon

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

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Sedges

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Rhizomatous, robust bright-green to yellow-green sedge, 0.5–1.2 m tall. **Culms** 1.5–3.5–(5) mm diam., triangular in cross-section, very sharply scabrid. **Basal sheaths** dull grey-brown or purple-brown. **Leaves** numerous, > culms (2)–5–9–(11), wide, double-folded, margins very scabrid. **Spikes** (10)–15–24, yellow-green, grass-green, or dark-green mottled red or purple, all pedunculate, pendulous, rather narrow, often twisted and "worm-like". **Glumes** dark red-purple, (excluding awns) more less same length as utricles, narrow-oblong, truncate or emarginate with a hispid awn of variable length. **Utricles** (2)–2.3–2.9–(3.5) × 1.2–1.7–(2) mm, biconvex, compressed at base, tapering evenly above, green-, red- or yellow-brown, 3–5-nerved, margins glabrous, beak minute or 0.2 mm long.

SIMILAR TAXA
Carex geminata has frequently been confused with *C. lessoniana* Steud. This species often grows in similar habitats, but can be distinguished by the compact inflorescences, with wider, though smaller, usually erect spikelets, and by distinctly beaked utricles. A similar species *C. ternaria* Boott is occasionally cultivated on the New Zealand mainland, this species is very much larger (up to 3 m tall), dark green sedge with much larger spikes and glumes which are conspicuously awned. Can also be confused with *C. coriacea* Hamlin, but the glumes of *C. coriacea* do not have awns.

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic. Found throughout the North, South and Stewart Islands.

HABITAT
Coastal to lower montane in freshwater wetlands, along river and stream banks, lake margins, and in damp seepages, pond margins and clearings within forest. Preferring fertile to mid-fertile wetlands.

GENUS
Carex

FAMILY
Cyperaceae

AUTHORITY
Carex geminata Schkuhr

Coromandel, March - an unnamed carex allied to C. geminata s.s. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

Seeds of Carex geminata. Photographer: Wayne Bennett, Licence: CC BY-NC.

SYNONYMS
Carex ternaria var. gracilis Cheeseman, C. confusa Hamlin.

TAXONOMIC NOTES
This taxon includes two entities, one probably better regarded as an allied but distinct, possibly unnamed species which differs from true *C. geminata* by its much broader, often yellow-green leaves, longer narrower spikelets, preference for open sunny sites within coastal and lowland wetlands, and also by distinct differences within the nrDNA ITS sequence region.

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
(September)–October–November–(December)

FRUITING
October–March

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 the division of established plants. Although a wetland species, *C. geminata* will grow well in most soils and moisture regimes. Does best in full sun.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING
FACW: Facultative Wetland
Usually is a hydrophyte but occasionally found in uplands (non-wetlands).

CULTIVATION
Occaisionally found in cultivation, possibly due to being a niche wetland species. Historically some plants offered by this name by some nurseries were unusually another quite unrelated species, the Northern Hemisphere *C. pendula* which is regarded as an environmental weed.

ETYMOLOGY
carex: Latin name for a species of sedge, now applied to the whole group.
geminata: Twinned

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

NVS CODE
CARGEM

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2017 | Not Threatened
2012 | Not Threatened
2009 | Not Threatened
2004 | Not Threatened
Jump to current conservation status

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Auckland: 2025 | Regionally Not Threatened | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT Help
The regional threat classification system leverages off the national assessments in the NZTCS, providing information relevant for the regional context. Auckland conservation status information is sourced from the "Conservation status of vascular plant species in Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland" Simpkins E et al. (2025) report.
Otago: 2025 | Regionally Not Threatened 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 for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (10 August 2006). Description adapted from Moore and Edgar (1970).

MORE INFORMATION

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

PDF DATE

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