Carex hectorii

COMMON NAMES
Hector's sedge

BIOSTATUS
Native – Endemic taxon

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

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Sedges

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Shortly rhizomatous, loosely tufted blue-green to red-green sedge of open damp ground, seepages, and flushes in tussock grassland, or fringing cushion bogs, tarns and ponds. **Culms** 20–120 × 0.5 mm, usually obscured within light brown leaf-sheaths. **Leaves** longer than culms, 0.5–1.5 mm wide, blue-green (rarely wine red, red-green to bright green), erect, rigid, lamina plano-convex at the base but flattening or occasionally subtrigonous towards the subacute apex, margins distinctly scabrid near the apex. **Inflorescence** of 3–4 contiguous, sessile or shortly pedunculate spikes 0.5–15 mm long. **Spikes** subtended by rigid, leaf-like bracts; these longer than inflorescence; terminal spike male, remaining spikes female. **Glumes** 2.2–2.4 mm long, lanceolate, acuminate, or cuspidate, membranous, brown, with membranous margins and pale green midrib. **Utricles** 2.5–3 × 1.5–2 mm, trigonous, elliptic-ovoid, spreading, conspicuously multi-nerved when immature, maturing glossy and more or less smooth, dark brown; beak 0.5 mm long, slender, acutely bifid, margins usually ciliate-serrate above; stipe short. **Stigmas** 3. **Nut** trigonous.



Old Man Range. Photographer: John Barkla, Licence: CC BY.



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

SIMILAR TAXA
Could be confused with *Carex uncifolia* Cheeseman, from which it chiefly differs by its wider, blue-green to green (rarely wine-red to red-green) rather than dark red to beetroot red leaves, and smooth, dark brown, rather than distinctly nerved, red-brown mature utricles. *Carex hectorii* is superficially similar to *C. decurtata* Cheeseman from which it differs by its shortly rhizomatous, lax tufted rather than densely (rigidly) tufted habit, usually blue-green rather than bright-green to yellow-green leaves and dark-brown rather than light brown utricles.

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic. New Zealand: North Island (known only from Mt Taranaki and adjacent Pouakai Range), South Island (widespread in Nelson and Central Otago).

HABITAT
A species of montane, subalpine to alpine wetlands, favouring flushes, cushion bogs, seepages or the margins of tarns, ponds usually within tussock grassland.

GENUS
Carex

FAMILY
Cyperaceae

AUTHORITY
Carex hectorii Petrie

SYNONYMS
None

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
September–December

FRUITING
October–July

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 best in a permanently moist soil in full sun. An excellent pot plant. Leaf colour varies and can be unstable in soem populations. This species woudl beenfit from some horticultural selection.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING
FAC: Facultative
Commonly occurs as either a hydrophyte or non-hydrophyte (non-wetlands).

ETYMOLOGY
carex: Latin name for a species of sedge, now applied to the whole group.
hectorii: Named after Sir James Hector, 19th century New Zealand geologist and botanist who was originally from Scotland

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

NVS CODE
CARHEC

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = c.64-68

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: Sp
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, NR, NS, NStr, Sp, St, TL 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. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ppees.2009.06.001.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (10 August 2006). Description adapted from Moore and Edgar (1970)

Some of this factsheet information is derived from Flora of New Zealand Online and is used under a Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 New Zealand licence.

MORE INFORMATION

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

PDF DATE

08 June 2026