

Carex inversa

COMMON NAMES

creeping lawn sedge

BIOSTATUS

Native

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Sedges

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Rhizomatous, extensively creeping yellow-green to green sedge. Plants variable in size, usually flaccid, forming a matted sward. **Rhizome** long-creeping, to 2 mm diameter, covered by closely appressed brown scales or their fibrous remains; shoots \pm distant, singly from the rhizome, c. 1 mm diameter at base including basal sheaths. **Culms** 20–450 \times c. 0.5–1.0 mm, weak, smooth, green to yellow-green, obtusely trigonous; basal sheaths pale brown almost cream. **Leaves** < mature culms, 0.5–1.5 mm wide, channelled to flat, soft, grass-like, margins usually smooth or very minutely scabrid towards tip. Inflorescence a pale green or bright green ovate head, c. 10 mm long, of 2–5 closely packed \pm sessile spikes, or occasionally 1–2 spikes distant from the rest; bracts subtending inflorescence and lower spikes green and leafy, much longer than inflorescence. **Spikes** androgynous, 4–8 mm long, male flowers 1–3 at base of spikes, occasionally 0. **Glumes** < utricles, ovate, acuminate, white or pale brown, with a green, faintly scabrid keel. **Utricles** 3.0–3.5 \times c.1.5 mm, plano-convex, ovoid, elliptical, distinctly nerved on convex face, light greenish brown; narrowed to a scabrid beak c.1 mm long; stipe slightly > 0.5 mm long, pale cream. **Stigmas** 2. **Nut** c. 1.5 mm. long, plano-convex, broadly oblong, shortly stipitate, light to dark brown.

SIMILAR TAXA

Perhaps most similar to *Carex colensoi* Boott, from which it is distinguished by the shortly creeping, usually flaccid, trailing habit, and yellow-green to green rather than long trailing, light-green (almost glaucous) culms topped by 2–5 (rarely 1–2) pale green to light yellow-brown spikes rather than relatively large inflorescences composed of 1–4 clustered brown spikes. The utricles of *C. inversa* are prominently beaked and nerved; those of *C. colensoi* are scarcely beaked utricles and with indistinct nerves.

DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. New Zealand: North and South Islands

HABITAT

Coastalt to montane - but mostly coastal to lowland. In scrub, open forest, and grassland. A common urban weed of lawns in northern New Zealand. This species has probably become more common as a result of human colonisation of the country.

GENUS

Carex

FAMILY

Cyperaceae



Carex inversa. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Carex inversa. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

AUTHORITY

Carex inversa R.Br.

SYNONYMS

Carex smaragdina Col.

ENDEMIC TAXON

No

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

Throughout the year

FRUITING

Throughout the year

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

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

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily (too easily) grown from fresh seed and rooted pieces. An aggressive plant in most situations which readily spreads from seed and by detachment of the rhizome. This species is unlikely to be deliberately cultivated though it can be a useful ground cover in dry, open situations. *Carex inversa* is often spread by lawn mowers, and once established can prove difficult to control.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACU: Facultative Upland

Occasionally is a hydrophyte but usually occurs in uplands (non-wetlands).

WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available.

ETYMOLOGY

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

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

[Key to indigenous and naturalised Carex in New Zealand](#)

NVS CODE

CARINV

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

$2n = c.40-44$

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO

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 At Risk – Regionally Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: 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 for NZPCN 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-inversa/>

PDF DATE

27 May 2026