

Carex kaloides

COMMON NAMES

sedge

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: Sp, DPS, DPT

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Sedges

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Rhizomatous; orange yellow, reddish-yellow to orange, tufted swarding sedge. Individual tufts often rather large and tussock-like. **Rhizome** 5 mm diameter, woody, covered in closely appressed, dark-brown, fibrous leaf-sheath remnants. **Culms** rising singly from rhizome, 0.3–1 m × 1 mm, at first stiffly erect, then arching and more or less spreading in upper third; trigonous, glabrous below, very finely scabrid on the angles close to the inflorescence; basal sheaths dull dark grey-brown to yellow-brown. **Leaves** < culms, 100–600 × 1–3.5 mm, channeled, keel well-marked, margins scabridulous near apex. **Inflorescence** erect, 50–180 mm long, usually compound or in large plants paniculate with distant appressed branchlets. **Spikes** 10–35, pale straw-coloured, usually distant, lower spikes and branchlets typically subtended by a chartaceous, long-awned bract with both keel and awn scabrid; lowermost bracts often leaf-like, > panicle in length; mostly male with perfect flowers near apex, or with mostly female with male flowers near the apex or in rare cases entirely male. **Glumes** > utricles, lanceolate, acuminate or awned, membranous to chartaceous, light creamy brown with a pale cream centre and rather broad hyaline margins. **Utricles** 4–5 × 1 mm, plano-convex, finely nerved; beak tapering, 1.5–2 mm long, winged with serrated margins; stipe 1 mm long, not contracted. **Stigmas** 2. **Nut** 2 mm, dark brown, plano-convex to biconvex, oblong, smooth.

SIMILAR TAXA

Perhaps closest to *C. muelleri* Petrie which differs from *C. kaloides* by its smaller stature, more extensively creeping swarding habit, strictly erect whitish-green, yellow-green to green tufted culms and leaves, creeping habit, and narrowly erect almost dioecious spicate inflorescences. The utricles of *C. muelleri* are much smaller, narrower and rather more strongly nerved.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. South Island in the east from Marlborough to Central Otago.

HABITAT

Montane to subalpine along river flats, in seepages, around the margins of lakes, ponds and tarns. Sometimes found in cushion bogs and amongst red tussock (*Chionochloa rubra* Zotov)-dominated wetlands. Easily overlooked because its orange yellow leaves blend in with the surrounding taller vegetation.

THREATS

A biologically sparse, naturally uncommon species which at times can be locally abundant but is otherwise scarce. Does not appear to be threatened, and can tolerate cattle browsing. However it is vulnerable to competition from faster growing, taller exotic plant species.



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GENUS

Carex

FAMILY

Cyperaceae

AUTHORITY

Carex kaloides Petrie

SYNONYMS

None

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

October–January

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 by division of whole plants and fresh seed. Does best in permanently damp ground and is an ideal plant for growing around ponds or along slow flowing stream margins in the South Island. It dislikes much competition and is intolerant of drought or excessive humidity.

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

CARKAL

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = c.78-84

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: DP, Sp

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Otago: 2025 | Regionally Threatened – Regionally Endangered | Qualifiers: DPT, NR, NStr, PD, Sp, 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.

ATTRIBUTION

Description adapted from Moore and Edgar (1970)

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/carex-kaloides/>

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