

Carex leporina

COMMON NAMES

oval sedge

BIOSTATUS

Exotic

CONSERVATION STATUS

Not applicable

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Sedges

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION

Dense pale green grass-like tufts or mat-like swards up to 1 m tall, with slightly taller flower stem bearing brown oval heads near the tip.

FLOWER COLOURS

Brown, Green

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Dense tufts; rhizome short. Stems 20–60–(120) cm tall, 3-angled, scabrid just below inflorescence. **Leaves** 1.5–3.5 mm wide, usually < stems, ± flat, ± soft, bright green, sheaths light brown. **Inflorescence** a compact ovoid head 2.5–4–(6) cm long, of 3–5–(11) approximate, sessile, light green to light brown spikes; bracts glume-like and inconspicuous or > inflorescence and ± setaceous. **Spikes** androgynous, male flowers at base. **Glumes** = or slightly < utricles, light brown with paler green to brown midrib, acute. **Utricles** 4–4.5 × ± 2 mm, ovoid, plano-convex, distinctly nerved, with winged margins almost covered by glumes, scabrid towards the tapered beak of ± 1 mm long. **Stigmas** 2. **Nut** plano-convex, ± oblong.

SIMILAR TAXA

Two other *Carex* spp. have oval spikes (*C. scoparia* and *C. longii*). Both these species have glumes shorter than the utricle, so *C. leporina* spikes appear less compact (see comparison with *C. scoparia* in photo).

DISTRIBUTION

Locally common throughout New Zealand.

HABITAT

Wide variety of wet habitats from lowland to subalpine, especially disturbed habitats, but also a problem weed in short turf wetland where it can completely displace indigenous vegetation.

GENUS

Carex

FAMILY

Cyperaceae

AUTHORITY

Carex leporina L.

SYNONYMS

Carex ovalis Gooden.



Tararua Range. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 01/02/2008, Licence: CC BY.



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ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

Late spring to early summer

FRUITING

Summer to autumn

YEAR NATURALISED

1879

ORIGIN

Europe, Asia, North Africa

REASON FOR INTRODUCTION

Unknown, seed or soil contaminant.

CONTROL TECHNIQUES

Can be controlled manually, mechanically or herbicidally depending on situation.

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

Seed dispersed by contaminated machinery or waterfowl.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACW: Facultative Wetland

Usually is a hydrophyte but occasionally found in uplands (non-wetlands).

ETYMOLOGY

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

ENVIRONMENTAL WEED (2024)

This plant is named in a list of 386 environmental weeds in New Zealand 2024 prepared by DOC. 759 candidate species were considered for inclusion on this new comprehensive list of environmental weeds in New Zealand. The species considered were drawn from published lists of weed species, lists of plants that must be reported or managed by law if observed, existing national and regional programmes and agreements for pest management, and species already managed by the Department of Conservation (DOC). Candidate species were then assessed to see if they were fully naturalised and whether they have more than minor impacts in natural ecosystems. Read the full report [here](#).

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

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

NVS CODE

CARLEP

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Champion P. et al. 2020. Freshwater Invasive Species of New Zealand 2020. NIWA publication.

<https://docs.niwa.co.nz/library/public/FreInSpec.pdf>

Healy AJ, Edgar E. 1980. Flora of New Zealand, Volume III. Adventive Cyperaceous, Petalous and Spathaceous Monocotyledons. Government Printer, Wellington, NZ. 220 p.

Johnson PN, Brooke PA. 1989. Wetland plants in New Zealand. DSIR Field Guide, DSIR Publishing, Wellington, NZ. 319 p.

ATTRIBUTION

Prepared by Paul Champion and Deborah Hofstra (NIWA). Features description from Healy and Edgar (1980).

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MORE INFORMATION

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

PDF DATE

08 June 2026