

# Carex libera

## COMMON NAME

sedge

## SYNONYMS

*Carex uncifolia* Cheeseman. var. *libera* Kük.

## FAMILY

Cyperaceae

## AUTHORITY

*Carex libera* (Kük.) Hamlin

## FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

## ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Sedges

## NVS CODE

CARLIB

## CHROMOSOME NUMBER

$2n = c.60$

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Not Threatened

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

## DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. South Island, North West Nelson.

## HABITAT

A species found in open, damp sites such as along stream sides, in seepages and around small pools, ponds, and tarns. Known to range from lowland to subalpine habitats. Often found in montane forest and in tussock grassland.

## WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACW: Facultative Wetland

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



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



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## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Shortly rhizomatous; somewhat openly tufted, dingy reddish green, red to red-green sedge. **Culms** 10–80 × 1 mm, cylindrical, glabrous; shorter culms almost hidden by brownish leaf sheaths. **Leaves** > culms, up to 250 × 0.5–1 mm, rather spreading but not drooping, somewhat coriaceous, concavo-convex, paler on undersides, margins finely scabrid toward apex. **Inflorescence** of 3–5, close-packed, sessile spikes; terminal spike male, erect, usually reddish brown to brownish; subtending bracts numerous, leaf-like. **Glumes** (excluding awns) usually slightly less than utricles, ovate, often emarginated and cuspidate, reddish brown with a distinctly thicker green midrib, sometimes uniformly red-brown. **Utricles** 2–3 × 1–1.5 mm, plano-convex, ovoid-ellipsoid, light grey-green or yellow-brown toward base, spotted with red or dark red-purple in distinct patches toward apex, nerves distinct, whitish; beak rather short (up to 0.5 mm), slightly narrowed, usually spotted red-purple, margins glabrous, crura shortly bidentate to almost truncate, scabrid; stipe minute, scarcely narrower than utricles. **Stigmas** 3. **Nut** 1 × 1 mm. dark brown, obovoid, trigonous with rounded angles.

## SIMILAR TAXA

*Carex libera* is closely allied to the three other reddish coloured sedges *C. edgariae* Hamlin, *C. filamentosa* Petrie and *C. uncifolia* Cheeseman, which all possess small, congested and approximate spikes. From these *C. libera* is closest to *C. edgariae* with which it shares similar concavo-convex leaves that are wider than 0.5 mm, and utricles that are scarcely beaked. From *C. edgariae*, *C. libera* can be recognised by the red-tipped rather than black-tipped utricles, and by the female glumes, which are almost the same or of equal length rather than ½ the length of the utricles. In *C. libera* the male glumes are usually reddish-brown and awned, while those of *C. edgariae* are creamy brown and usually entire.

## FLOWERING

October–January

## FRUITING

October–May

## LIFE CYCLE

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

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown in pots and in an open, sunny but permanently damp situation. A very attractive small sedge well worth cultivating.

## ETYMOLOGY

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

## ATTRIBUTION

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

## 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.

## NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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## MORE INFORMATION

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