

Carex litorosa

COMMON NAME

sea sedge

SYNONYMS

Carex littoralis Petrie, Carex australis Kirk

FAMILY

Cyperaceae

AUTHORITY

Carex litorosa L.H.Bailey

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Sedges

NVS CODE

CARLIT

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 48

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

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

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: RR

2009 | At Risk – Declining

2004 | Serious Decline

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. North Island, South Island and Stewart Island/Rakiura.

HABITAT

Coastal in salty, brackish marshes and on sandy, tidal river banks.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

OBL: Obligate Wetland

Almost always is a hydrophyte, rarely in uplands (non-wetlands).

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

An upright sedge to 800 mm tall (but usually smaller), that forms pale green or reddish, dense tussocks with curly tops. **Leaves** are flat on one side, curved on the other and slightly serrated along the edge, 1.5 mm wide and about the same length as the flower stem. **Flower stems** are cylindrical and upright, with light brown spikes.



Carex litorosa. Photographer: Cathy Jones, Licence: CC BY.



Whitiau Scientific Reserve, Whangaehu River mouth. Photographer: Colin C. Ogle, Licence: CC BY-NC.

SIMILAR TAXA

Carex divisa, which also grows in saltmarshes but has blue-grey leaves, and smaller, compact black spikes borne on long stems near the apex of the leaves of each tussock.

FLOWERING

October–December

FRUITING

December–April (but seedheads long persistent)

LIFE CYCLE

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

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easy from fresh seed and by the division of whole plants. Very easy to grow in a range of substrates.

THREATS

Habitat loss through coastal development. Encroachment by weeds is a serious problem in the North Island, especially from species such as spartina, tall fescue and Carex divisa.

ETYMOLOGY

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

litorosa: From the Latin littus 'shore', meaning shore-loving or growing on the shore

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange 2 September 2003.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

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-litorosa/>