

Carex megalepis

COMMON NAME

bastard grass, caver's beard

SYNONYMS

Uncinia ferruginea Boott; *Uncinia nigra* Col.; *Uncinia variegata* Col.;
Uncinia australis Pers. var. *ferruginea* (Boott) C.B. Clarke; *Uncinia uncinata*
(Linn.f.) Kük. var. *ferruginea* (Boott) Kük.

FAMILY

Cyperaceae

AUTHORITY

Carex megalepis K.A. Ford

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Sedges

NVS CODE

UNCFER

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

$2n = 88$

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Not Threatened

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: North, South and Stewart Islands. From northern Waikato south.

HABITAT

Coastal to montane forest, especially in the west. Often abundant in forest overlying calcareous rocks.



Herbarium specimen: AK 298307.
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Herbarium specimen: AK 298307.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Robust, yellow-green to dark green caespitose plants. **Culms** 100–600 × c. 1 mm, glabrous; basal bracts dull brown to reddish brown. **Leaves** 4–8 per culm, = or > culms, 3–5 mm wide, scabrid on the margins. **Spikes** 70–160 × 6–10 mm, usually bracteate, female flowers c. 60–100, very closely crowded throughout the whole spike, internodes 0.5–4.0 mm long. **Glumes** twice as long as utricles, deciduous, linear-subulate, acute or obtuse, coriaceous, dark golden yellow or rust-coloured. **Utricles** 4.0–5.0 × c. 1.5 mm., plano-convex or rarely subtrigonal, dark brown, shining, nerved towards the base with a more strongly marked lateral nerve, sharply contracted below to a stipe 1 mm long and above to a stout beak 1.5–2.0 mm long.

SIMILAR TAXA

Most similar to *Carex corynoidea* and *C. uncinata*, species with which it sometimes grows. Of both species it is most closely allied to *C. corynoidea* from which it differs by the conspicuous dark golden yellow or rust-coloured rather than yellowish to dark brown glumes which are twice as long as the utricles (rather than equal or slightly greater in length), and by the scarcely spreading rather than widely spreading utricles. *Carex uncinata* differs by the usually narrower spikes, early deciduous rather than long-persistent deciduous glumes, which are usually much shorter than the utricles, and mostly < 1.0 mm diameter (cf. 1.5 mm or greater)

FLOWERING

October–December

FRUITING

November–May

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from fresh seed and by the division of established plants (though these may then take a while to settle). Does best in a permanently damp, semi-shaded site. Benefits from regular applications of lime. Should be planted where the seed heads are well out of the way of human and animal traffic!

ETYMOLOGY

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

WHERE TO BUY

Not Commercially Available.

CULTURAL USE/IMPORTANCE

This species is known as caver's beard in the western Waikato because of its tendency to grow around cave entrances. In these sites the hooked utricles frequently become ensnared in cavers entering or exiting caves eliciting much comment from the ensnared caver.

ATTRIBUTION

Description adapted from Moore and Edgar (1970). Fact sheet prepared by Peter J. de Lange 17 August 2006.

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.

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

Please cite as: de Lange, P.J. (Year at time of access): *Carex megalepis* Fact Sheet (content continuously updated). New Zealand Plant Conservation Network. <https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/carex-megalepis/> (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION

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