

Carex penalpina

COMMON NAME

bastard grass, hook sedge

SYNONYMS

Uncinia fuscovaginata Kük.; *Uncinia purpurata* Petrie var. *fuscovaginata* Cheeseman, *Uncinia fuscovaginata* var. *fuscovaginata*, *Uncinia fuscovaginata* var. *caespitans* Hamlin

FAMILY

Cyperaceae

AUTHORITY

Carex penalpina K.A.Ford

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Sedges

NVS CODE

UNCFUS

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 Island (Volcanic Plateau, Kaimanawa, Ruahine and Tararua Ranges), South Island (widespread except in Westland) and Stewart Islands.

HABITAT

Upper montane to alpine. In sparse forest and subalpine scrub, snow-tussock and short-tussock grassland, herbfield, and on ultramafic rock, scree and fellfield.



Mount Holdsworth, Tararua Range.
Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken:
08/02/2008, Licence: CC BY.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Shortly rhizomatous or loosely tufted, bright green, yellow-green or glaucous plants. **Rhizome** woody, 2–3 mm diameter **Culms** 80–400 × 0.7–2.0 mm, stiffly erect, scabrid below inflorescence; basal bracts dull reddish brown or dull dark brown. Leaves 4–7 per culm, < or ± = culms, 1.5–5.0 mm wide, rigid, curved to falcate, coriaceous, margins usually harshly scabrid but occasionally almost glabrous, upper surface near tip scabrid. **Spikes** 20–75 × 3–7 mm, linear to subclavate, occasionally bracteate, female flowers usually 10–15, mostly close-set, rarely rather lax, internodes to 6 mm long at base of spike, 2–3 mm long above. **Glumes** slightly >, = or slightly < utricles, persistent, ovate, obtuse or lowermost subacute, coriaceous, greenish brown, light brown or dull dark brown, rarely bright chestnut-brown, midrib broad, green, margins white, hyaline. **Utricles** 5.0–7.5 × 1.5–2.0 mm, plano-convex or concavo-convex, ovate or obovate, many-nerved, tapered above to a beak 1.5–2.0 mm long, slightly narrowed at the base to a stipe 1–2 mm long.

SIMILAR TAXA

Carex penalpina appears closely allied to the much less common, biological sparse *C. purpurata* (Petrie) K.A.Ford. Both species have leaf-sheaths, leaves and glumes without any red pigmentation, close-set flowers, utricles 1–2 mm diameter and wiry culms up to 500 mm long. From *Carex purpurata*, *C. penalpina* differs by the culms which are 0.7–2.0 mm rather than c. 0.5 mm diameter, and by the glumes which are more or less equal rather than $\frac{1}{2}$ – $\frac{3}{4}$ the length of the utricles. *Carex purpurata* is confined to Otago where it is usually found under dry rock overhangs or in grey scrub, while *C. penalpina* is found in both North and South Islands and is ecologically more wide ranging (see Habitat).

FLOWERING

October–November

FRUITING

November–May

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from fresh seed and by division of established plants, though these may take a while to settle. Prefers moist soil. Once established will tolerate a wide range of conditions. This species would repay critical horticultural investigation. The glaucous form found in northern South Island ultramafics is especially attractive.

ETYMOLOGY

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

WHERE TO BUY

Not Commercially Available

NOTES ON TAXONOMY

Carex penalpina is a very variable species. A glaucous form apparently confined to the ultramafic rocks of the northern South Island is especially distinctive and may warrant further investigation.

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 penalpina* Fact Sheet (content continuously updated). New Zealand Plant Conservation Network. <https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/carex-penalpina/> (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION

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