Carex potens

COMMON NAMES
bastard grass, hook sedge

BIOSTATUS
Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | Not Threatened
Jump to previous conservation statuses

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Sedges

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Stoutly erect, densely caespitose, yellow-green to dark green plants. **Culms** 100.0–800.0 × 0.5–1.0 mm diameter, sharply trigonous, scabrid below inflorescence, often drooping; basal sheaths dull dark brown. **Leaves** 3–4 per culm, = or slightly < culms, 1.5–2.0 mm wide, yellow-green to dark green, margins harshly scabrid, slightly involute when dry. **Spikes** 50–140 mm long, female flowers c. 15–20, lax, internodes 11 mm long at base of spike, 3–6 mm long above. **Glumes** ± = or rarely much < utricles, persistent, obtuse or lowermost subacute, coriaceous, pale brown. **Utricles** 6–7 × c. 1 mm., plano-convex, lanceolate or oblong-lanceolate, grey-brown, nerved, slightly contracted or cuneate at the base forming a stipe 1.5–2.0 mm long, beak 2 mm long.

SIMILAR TAXA
Distinguished from the other New Zealand species by the lax inflorescences, and utricles which are c. 1 mm diameter. It is most likely to be confused with *Carex erythrovaginata* K.A.Ford from which it differs by the leaf-sheaths, leaves and glumes which lack red colouration. *Carex potens* is very closely allied to the Australian *Carex umbricola* K.L.Wilson.

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic. New Zealand. North Island (Mt Egmont, Central Volcanic Plateau, Ruahine and Tararua Ranges), South Island.

HABITAT
Mostly montane to alpine, rarely coastal in southern part of its range. In forests, subalpine scrub and frost flats.

GENUS
Carex

FAMILY
Cyperaceae

AUTHORITY
Carex potens K.A.Ford,

SYNONYMS
Uncinia affinis (C.B.Clarke) Hamlin; Uncinia riparia R.Br. var. affinis Col. ex C.B.Clarke; Uncinia purpurata Petrie var. subcaespitosa Kük.

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

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ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
October–November

FRUITING
November–January

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Easily grown from fresh seed and by division of established plants. Prefers a permanently moist, peaty soil but will grow in most substrates. Best in semi-shade.

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

MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY
Key to indigenous and naturalised Carex in New Zealand

NVS CODE
CARPOT

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 88

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2017 | Not Threatened
2012 | Not Threatened
2009 | Not Threatened
2004 | Not Threatened
Jump to current conservation status

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES
Otago: 2025 | Regionally Data Deficient | Qualifiers: NStr, TL Help
The regional threat classification system leverages off the national assessments in the NZTCS, providing information relevant for the regional context. Otago conservation status information is sourced from the "Conservation Status of Indigenous Vascular Plants in Otago, 2025" Jarvie S et al. (2025) report.

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.

ATTRIBUTION
Description adapted from Moore and Edgar (1970).
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MORE INFORMATION
https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/carex-potens/

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