

# Carex purpurata

## COMMON NAME

purple bastard grass, tussock hook grass

## SYNONYMS

Uncinia purpurata Petrie

## FAMILY

Cyperaceae

## AUTHORITY

Carex purpurata (Petrie) K.A.Ford

## FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

## ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Sedges

## NVS CODE

UNCPUR

## CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 88

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: Sp

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: Sp

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon

2004 | Sparse

## DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. South Island, Canterbury (Fox Hill), Otago (hills near Dunedin, Ben Lomond, Mt Bengier and other peaks and ranges of Central Otago) and Southland.

## HABITAT

A species of damp, open ground under montane forest and subalpine scrub, in tall tussock grassland, in grey scrub and in or near cliff faces. It prefers damp sites in seepages, near small springs or under rock overhangs.

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Tufted, caespitose, gracile sedge. **Culms** 40–400 × 0.5 mm, finely scabrid below inflorescence; basal bracts dull brown to yellow brown. **Leaves** 3–5 per culm, much < than mature culms in length, 1–2 mm wide, erect or slightly curved, faintly scabrid on the margins and undersides, especially towards the leaf apex. **Spikes** 25–40 × 3–4 mm, ebracteate, female flowers 10–20, close set, becoming rather lax at maturity with internodes up to 5 mm apart near base of spike, 1.5 mm above. **Glumes** mostly  $\frac{1}{2}$ – $\frac{3}{4}$  glume length, persistent, broadly ovate, obtuse or lowermost subacute, coriaceous, bright chesnut-brown with a green or light brown midrib and broad, whitish to white-grey hyaline margins. **Utricle** 4.5–5.5 × 1–2 mm, plano-convex, oblong or obovate, dark brown with numerous faint veins, beak 1–1.5 mm long, stipe c. 1 mm long.



## SIMILAR TAXA

Perhaps closest to *Carex penalpina* K.A.Ford from which it differs by its much more gracile/slender habit, faintly scabrid leaves and especially by the bright chesnut-brown colour of the glumes. Unlike *Carex penalpina*, the glumes of *C. purpurata* are markedly shorter than the utricles. Despite the specific epithet, *C. purpurata* often has a washed out, whitish green colouration, only the occasional plant is wine-red or purple-tinged. In the field *C. purpurata* can be recognised by the dark spikes, narrowly hyaline glume margin and dark brown almost black immature utricles which fade to chestnut as the utricle matures and spreads. In some examples the glume may be dark chestnut. The leaves of *C. purpurata* are usually much narrower than *C. penalpina* which has more obviously coriaceous and curved leaves than those of *C. purpurata* which are straight to curved and very pliant.

## FLOWERING

October–November

## FRUITING

October–April

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Probably easily grown in a suitably moist, peaty soil.

## THREATS

This species is never abundant at any particular location and is quite widespread, though rather localised, being a truly biologically sparse, naturally uncommon sedge. It does not appear to have suffered any decline, indeed as a result of field surveys over the last 20 years it is now known to be quite secure and widespread over much of its range.

## ETYMOLOGY

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

**purpurata**: Purplish in colour

## WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available

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

## MORE INFORMATION

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