

Carex pyrenaica var. cephalotes

COMMON NAMES

mountain sedge

BIOSTATUS

Native

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Sedges

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Densely tufted or cushion-forming dark green to bright glaucous green sedges arising from an ascending deeply rooted rhizome. **Culms** 10–200 × 0.5–1 mm, terete, smooth; basal sheaths light brown or grey-brown. **Leaves** numerous, usually < culms, 0.5–1.5 mm wide, involute at the base, flattened toward obtuse or subacute apex, plano-convex, margins finely scabrid. **Inflorescence** solitary, terminal, usually ebracteate. **Spike** ovoid to oblong, 5–20 × 5–10 mm, male flowers numerous overtopping the numerous females. **Glumes** mostly < utricle length, ovate, acute, caduceous to deciduous, membranous, red-brown, midrib light brown, margins hyaline. **Utricles** 2.5–5 × 1 mm, plano-convex, elliptic-lanceolate, strongly reflexed when mature, smooth, glabrous, pale yellow-brown; beak 1 mm long, red-brown, crura oblique, membranous, stipe 1 mm long or absent. **Stigmas** 2–3. **Nut** 1.5–2 mm long, oblong, smooth dimorphic; biconvex in flowers with 2 stigmas, subtrigonal in flowers with 3 stigmas.

SIMILAR TAXA

Easily distinguished by the unispicate, ebracteate inflorescence this separates this carex from all except *C. capillacea* Boott from which it differs by its wider leaves, and distinctly coriaceous, shortly stipitate and longer 2.5–4.5 mm long utricles. *Carex pyrenaica* Wahlenb. var. *pyrenaica* of Europe, Asia and North America has flowers with mainly 3 stigmas and utricles with markedly longer stipes.

DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. North and South Islands. In the North Island known from Mt Taranaki (Egmont/Taranaki), Ruahine and Tararua Ranges. In the South common throughout the main mountain ranges though scarce in Marlborough. Also present in Australia.

HABITAT

Subalpine to alpine cushion and sphagnum bog, tarn and stream margins and damp seepages and flushes within tussock grassland and alpine herbfield.

GENUS

Carex

FAMILY

Cyperaceae



Mt Robert. January. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Mount Ruapehu. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 08/02/2012, Licence: CC BY.

AUTHORITY

Carex pyrenaica var. cephalotes (F.Muell.) Kük.

SYNONYMS

Carex cephalotes F.Muell.

ENDEMIC TAXON

No

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

October–December

FRUITING

November–May

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

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

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from division of whole plants and from fresh seed. Does best in a pot partially submerged in water. Dislikes humidity and will not tolerant drought.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FAC: Facultative

Commonly occurs as either a hydrophyte or non-hydrophyte (non-wetlands).

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

CARPVC

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 Not Threatened [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.

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.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared by P.J. de Lange (10 August 2006). Description adapted from Moore and Edgar (1970). Some of this factsheet information is derived from [Flora of New Zealand Online](#) and is used under a [Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 New Zealand](#) licence.

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/carex-pyrenaica-var-cephalotes/>

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