Carex resectans

COMMON NAMES
desert sedge

BIOSTATUS
Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: DPR, DPS, DPT
Jump to previous conservation statuses

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Sedges

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Rhizomatous; yellow-green to dark green sedge, usually forming a dense sward, or small circular patches. **Rhizome** 1.0–1.5 mm diameter, woody, much-branched, long-creeping, with shoots spaced singly and evenly along it, c. 1 mm diameter at base. **Culms** 5–40 mm tall, completely hidden by the leaf-sheaths; basal sheaths light grey-brown or chestnut. **Leaves** much > culms, 20–100 × c. 0.5 mm, plano-convex towards the tip, involute towards the base, wiry, margins scabrid especially towards the long trigonous tip. **Inflorescence** a pale green, compact head, 4–8 mm long, orbicular-ovate, with 1–3 crowded spikes, subtended by 2–3 leaf-like bracts. **Spikes** androgynous, few-flowered, male flowers 1–3 at base of spike, occasionally 0, female flowers 3–8. **Glumes** < or rarely = utricles, ovate or ovate-lanceolate, acuminate, hyaline, keel stout, green, 1-3-nerved. **Utricles** 3–4 × 1.5–2.0 mm, plano-convex, prominently nerved, light brown; contracted above to a narrow green beak c. 1.5 mm long, margins minutely toothed, orifice bifid; stipe not markedly contracted, c. 0.1 mm long. **Stigmas** 2. **Nut** c. 1.5 mm long, plano-convex, obovoid to almost orbicular, brown, shining, shortly stipitate.

SIMILAR TAXA
Carex resectans is most similar to *C. colensoi* Boott and *C. inversa* R.Br.; two other densely tufted, grass-like species from which it is easily distinguished by the long-creeping rhizome with the shoots spread evenly along it, culms sheathed by leaves for almost their entire length, few-flowered, minute inflorescences which are usually obscured within the surrounding foliage, and light brown nuts with a pale green, minutely toothed beak.

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic. New Zealand: North and South Islands. Mainly easterly and uncommon in the North Island where it is found from about Hawke's Bay south.

HABITAT
Coastal to alpine. Usually on consolidated sand and alluvium in free draining usually very dry (though often seasonally flooded) habitats in short-tussock grassland, rough pasture, or in river beds or lake margins.

GENUS
Carex



In cultivation ex Turakirae Head. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 19/10/2007, Licence: CC BY.



In cultivation ex Turakirae Head. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 19/10/2007, Licence: CC BY.

FAMILY
Cyperaceae

AUTHORITY
Carex resectans Cheeseman

SYNONYMS
Carex inversa R.Br. var. radiata Cheeseman

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
October–December

FRUITING
November–April

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

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Easily grown from the division of whole plants and from fresh seed. Best suited for a well drained, sunny site in dry climates. This species dislikes humidity and soon dies if kept to moist.

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
CARRES

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 58-60

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 At Risk – Regionally Declining | Qualifiers: DPR, DPS, DPT, NR, N NStr Str, Sp 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 for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (10 August 2006). Description adapted from Moore and Edgar (1970)
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MORE INFORMATION

https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/carex-resectans/

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