

# Carex spirostris

## COMMON NAME

coastal sedge, petrel scrub sedge

## SYNONYMS

*Carex cinnamomea* Cheesman.; *Carex forsteri* Wahl. var. *cockayniana* (Kük.) Kük.

## FAMILY

Cyperaceae

## AUTHORITY

*Carex spirostris* Colenso

## FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

## ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Sedges

## NVS CODE

CARSPI

## CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 60-66

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Not Threatened

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

## DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. North Island from Te Paki south to the Horowhenua and Wairarapa. Most common in northern part of range, particularly along the coast and on many of the Hauraki Gulf islands.

## HABITAT

Favouring coastal to lowland forest, usually in semi-shaded sites on banks, colluvium or gently sloping sites overlying free draining, fertile soils. Also a conspicuous sedge of offshore islands in the Hauraki Gulf where it is one of the main species found under forest within petrel colonies.



Motumakareta, Coromandel. Oct.  
Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth



Motumakareta, Coromandel. Oct.  
Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth

## FEATURES

Densely caespitose, tufted, dark green sedge of high fertility sites in shaded coastal forest, lowland forest and forested offshore islands (especially within petrel colonies). Culms 0.1-1.2 m x 1.5-2 mm; basal sheaths dark red-purple. Leaves equal to or greater than culms, 2.5-6 mm wide, double-folded, with keel and margins distinctly scabrid. Inflorescence of 4-6-8 spikes; terminal spike male, often compound, with female flowers intermixed in the secondary spikes; remaining spikes female with a few male flowers at the base, equal to or slightly longer than male spikes, 15-85(-100) x 3-4 mm, uppermost spikes close set, shortly pedunculate, lowermost spikes rather distant, drooping on slender filiform peduncles; subtending bracts leaf-like, much longer than inflorescence, almost the same width as foliage leaves. Glumes equal to or slightly than utricles in length, bright red-purple, rather membranous, deciduous, lanceolate, subacute to almost emarginated, midrib extended as a long scabrid awn. Utricles 3-4 x 1 mm, triquetrous, fusiform, conspicuously ribbed with pale veins, margins smooth, pale grey below, above bright red and narrowed (often rather abruptly) to a 1.5 mm long beak; crura scabrid; stipe 0.5 mm long. Stigmas 3. Nut 2 mm long, yellow, yellow-brown or rarely light brown, oblong, trigonous.

## SIMILAR TAXA

Closely allied to *Carex ophiolithica* de Lange et Heenan from which it differs by its ecology, non-bulbous culm bases, drooping culms, dense tussock-forming habit, dark red-brown to purple-brown basal sheaths, distinctly pendulous spikelets, bright red-purple glumes, red to red-brown mature utricles, and yellow, yellow-brown or rarely light brown, oblong, trigonous, smaller nut. *Carex ophiolithica* is a smaller sedge of open coastal ultramafic cliff, scree, boulder field, and low scrub with bulbous culm bases, erect culms, erect, very shortly pedunculate spikes, light green to pale brown glumes, pale brown to purple brown glumes, and a larger ovoid, trigonous, dark brown to grey brown nut.

## FLOWERING

August - October

## FRUITING

September - March

## LIFE CYCLE

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. Does best in free draining, fertile soils in semi-shade. An attractive sedge well worth cultivating.

## ETYMOLOGY

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

## WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available

## ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared by P.J. de Lange (10 August 2006). Description adapted from Moore and Edgar (1970)

## REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Moore, L.B.; Edgar, E. 1970: Flora of New Zealand. Vol. II. Government Printer, Wellington.

Thorsen, M. J.; Dickinson, K. J. M.; Seddon, P. J. 2009. Seed dispersal systems in the New Zealand flora.

Perspectives in Plant Ecology, Evolution and Systematics 2009 Vol. 11 No. 4 pp. 285-309

## NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

Please cite as: de Lange, P.J. (Year at time of access): *Carex spinirostris* Fact Sheet (content continuously updated). New Zealand Plant Conservation Network. <https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/carex-spinirostris/> (Date website was queried)

## MORE INFORMATION

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