

# Carex strictissima

## COMMON NAMES

handsome bastard grass, hook sedge

## BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

## CATEGORY

Vascular

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Sedges

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Dark olive-green to red-green rush-like sedge, forming dense tufts.

**Culms** 300–550–(700) × 1 mm, initially trigonous and scabrid but maturing as terete and smooth (except for just under the inflorescence). **Basal bracts** dull dark brown. **Leaves** much reduced, inrolled or flat, 1–2 mm wide, rigid, strongly nerved, scabrid on margins, midrib bright red. **Spikes** 30–100 mm long, subtended by a reddish filiform bract > spike. **Female flowers** 10–15, distant in longer spikes, internodes up to 14 mm long at base but decreasing to 3 mm toward apex. **Glumes** ≤ utricles, persistent, obtuse or subacute, green to light brown, tinged pink. **Utricles** 6–7.5 × 2 mm, plano-convex, nerved, light brown, often pink near apex, stipe and beak up to 15 mm long.

## SIMILAR TAXA

A distinctive species perhaps most closely allied to *Carex erythrovaginata* K.A.Ford from which it differs by the unusual, erect rush-like growth form and by the usually inrolled, (1)–2–3, 1 mm wide leaves.

## DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. In the North Island known only from the Central Volcanic Plateau. In the South Island it apparently has an easterly distribution, being recorded from the Nelson lakes, Canterbury, Otago and Southland.

## HABITAT

Lowland scrub, swamps, lake margins and in damp clears within lowland forest.

## THREATS

Herbarium specimens indicate that this was never a common species. However, it is clear that it has declined over large parts of its range, and it is now very close to extinction in the North Island. The species seems to be threatened by habitat loss as a result of weed invasion and by animal browse.

## GENUS

Carex

## FAMILY

Cyperaceae

## AUTHORITY

*Carex strictissima* (Kük.) K.A.Ford



In cultivation. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 02/03/2009, Licence: CC BY.

## SYNONYMS

*Uncinia strictissima* Petrie; *Uncinia rigida* Petrie non Boeck., *U. rubra* var. *rigida* (Petrie) Cheeseman, *U. rubra* var. *strictissima* Kuk

## ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## FLOWERING

October–December

## FRUITING

November–May (as the inflorescence is long persistent, fruits may be present all year round).

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from fresh seed and the division of whole plants. Prefers cool, damp ground but once established will tolerate drought. Excellent in semi-shade.

## WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACW: Facultative Wetland

Usually is a hydrophyte but occasionally found in uplands (non-wetlands).

## PLANT OF THE MONTH

This plant has been featured as a Plant of the Month – see [Trilepidea: NZPCN newsletter for May 2011](#) for the full story.

## ETYMOLOGY

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

**strictissima**: Very straight and narrow

## MANAAKI WHENUA ONLINE INTERACTIVE KEY

[Key to indigenous and naturalised Carex in New Zealand](#)

## NVS CODE

CARSTR

## CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 88

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered | Qualifiers: DP

2012 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered | Qualifiers: DP

2009 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered | Qualifiers: DP

2004 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

## REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Otago: 2025 | Regionally Threatened – Regionally Critical | Qualifiers: DPR, DPS, DPT, NStr, PF, RF, Sp, 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

Fact sheet prepared for NZPCN by Peter J. de Lange 17 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-strictissima/>

## PDF DATE

08 June 2026