Carex subdola

COMMON NAMES
sedge

BIOSTATUS
Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | Not Threatened
Jump to previous conservation statuses

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Sedges

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Rhizomatous, bright green to somewhat glaucescent sedge forming rather rigid erect tufts. **Rhizome** 2–4 mm diameter, hard, woody. **Culms** 80–600 × 1.0–2.5 mm, trigonous, lightly scabrid below inflorescence; basal sheaths light brown, grey-brown or reddish brown. **Leaves** numerous, > culms, 2–4 mm wide, double-folded, ± erect, keel and margins of lamina sharply scabrid. **Spikes** 4–8, pedunculate, all ± approximate or the lowest more distant, terminal (1)–2–(3) spikes male, the remainder female, often male at the tip, 30–75 × 4–7 mm, lower spikes often with 1–2 secondary spikes at the base. **Glumes** < or ± = utricles, ovate-oblong, emarginate with a strongly scabrid awn to 6 mm long, dark red-brown, coriaceous; midrib broad, 3-nerved, green to later light brown. **Utricles** 3.0–4.5 × 2.0–2.5 mm, biconvex, rather compressed, ovoid, usually cinnamon-brown, with many distinct nerves on each face, smooth, tapering gradually towards the short beak, < 0.5 mm long, orifice entire, slightly bidentate, occasionally faintly scabrid; stipe slightly < 0.5 mm long. **Stigmas** 2. **Nut** 1.5–2 mm long, plano-convex, oblong or ovoid, brown

In cultivation. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 22/10/2007, Licence: CC BY.

SIMILAR TAXA
Carex subdola can be confused with *C. sinclairii*. From that species it is best distinguished by the colour of the mature utricles; those of *C. subdola* are bright cinnamon-brown, and those of *C. sinclairii* are yellow-brown to dark brown. Smaller specimens of *C. sinclairii* have glumes without awns, or scarcely awned, and obovoid utricles with only 2–5 prominent nerves, but larger plants have longer awns in some of the glumes and the utricles are ovoid and tapering with nerves as is more usual in *C. subdola*.

Howarth wetland, Te Aroha. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic. New Zealand: North and South Islands from Awanui south to Nelson and Marlborough.

HABITAT
Coastal to lowland in freshwater wetlands, under willow in gully systems, along river and stream banks, lake margins, and in damp seepages, pond margins and clearings within forest. Preferring fertile to mid-fertile wetlands.

GENUS
Carex

FAMILY
Cyperaceae

AUTHORITY
Carex subdola Boott

SYNONYMS
None

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
September–November

FRUITING
October–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 fresh seed and by the division of established plants. Although a wetland species *C. subdola* will grow in most soils and moisture regimes. However, this species does best when grown in permanently damp conditions.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING
OBL: Obligate Wetland
Almost always is a hydrophyte, rarely in uplands (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
CARSUB

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2017 | Not Threatened
2012 | Not Threatened
2009 | Not Threatened
2004 | Not Threatened
Jump to current conservation status

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES
Auckland: 2025 | Regionally Threatened – Regionally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: DPR, DPS, DPT, PF, RR Help
The regional threat classification system leverages off the national assessments in the NZTCS, providing information relevant for the regional context. Auckland conservation status information is sourced from the "Conservation status of vascular plant species in Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland" Simpkins E 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)
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MORE INFORMATION

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

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