

Carex testacea

COMMON NAME

speckled sedge, trip me up

SYNONYMS

None

FAMILY

Cyperaceae

AUTHORITY

Carex testacea Sol. ex Boott

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Sedges

NVS CODE

CARTES

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = c.52

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Not Threatened

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: North and South Islands. Uncommon in the South Island.

HABITAT

Coastal to montane. In sand dunes, coastal forest and scrub, dense forest or short tussock (*Festuca novae-zelandiae* (Hack.) Cockayne) grassland.



Otama Beach, February. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



At Otama Beach, February. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Densely tufted, 0.3–0.6–(0.8) m high, usually dark red to orange-red sedge. **Culms** < or > leaves, often exceedingly elongated at maturity, up to 2 m long, trailing, prostrate, < 1 mm diameter, often almost filiform, trigonous or subtrigonous, glabrous or slightly scabrid below the inflorescence; basal sheaths dark brown or red-brown, nerves distinct. **Leaves** 1.0–2.5–(3.0) mm wide, channelled, usually reddish or orange-green, sometime slight green, harshly scabrid. **Spikes** 3–5, ± approximate; terminal spike male, c. 1 mm diameter, ± = female spikes in length, on a filiform peduncle; remaining spikes female, 5–25–(30) × c. 5 mm, often with a few male flowers at the base, sessile, or the lowest more distant and shortly pedunculate. **Glumes** (excluding awn) ± = utricle, broadly ovate, thin and membranous, often deeply emarginate, occasionally entire, very light brown with darker flecks, midrib usually brown-spotted, produced to a scabrid awn of variable length. **Utricles** c. 2.5 × 1.5 mm, ± plano-convex, broadly ovoid, pale yellow-brown below, purple-brown above, nerved, more strongly so on the more convex face, shining, narrowed abruptly to the deeply bifid beak c. 0.5 mm long, margins and orifice usually finely scabrid, occasionally ± contracted below to a stipe c. 0.5 mm long. **Stigmas** 2. **Nut** c. 1.5 mm long, biconvex, dark brown, almost black.

SIMILAR TAXA

Carex testacea belongs to a complex of allied species which include the South Island, ultramafic endemic *C. devia* Cheesemanii, *C. raoulii* Boott, and *C. flagellifera* Colenso. From *C. devia* and *C. raoulii* it is best distinguished by its usually long trailing fruiting culms, narrow, mostly orange-red, or reddish-green, channelled leaves, and usually distant, pendent female spikes. It is morphologically closest to *C. flagellifera* (itself a species complex). From that species, at least in its typical form it differs by the usually orange-red to red-green, rather than yellow-green to dark green culms, and membranous, mostly light brown glumes bearing numerous fine, red-brown striae, rather than uniformly red brown to dark red-brown, subcoriaceous glumes. Forms of *C. testacea* from upland short-tussock grassland typically have wider leaves and shorter culms, and in some sites are difficult to distinguish from *C. wakatipu* Petrie.

FLOWERING

September–December

FRUITING

November–May (but may be present throughout the year)

LIFE CYCLE

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

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from fresh seed and by division of established plants. Can be grown in full sun and deep shade but prefers a free draining soil. Forms with dark orange-red leaves and culms are very popular in cultivation.

ETYMOLOGY

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

testacea: From the Latin 'testa' tile, referring to either the hard quality of something or its yellow-brown colour like that of terracotta.

NOTES ON TAXONOMY

Carex testacea is extremely variable and is probably better regarded as a species complex. Plants of inland forests are usually much stouter, and have longer, darker brown spikes than those collected from coastal areas.

ATTRIBUTION

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

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.

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

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