Carex ventosa

COMMON NAMES
Chatham Islands forest sedge

BIOSTATUS
Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2023 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DPR, DPS, DPT, IE, RR
Jump to previous conservation statuses

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Sedges

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Stout, rather leafy, shortly-rhizomatous, tussock forming sedge of forested places and well drained soils. **Rhizomes** erect, rather short, up to 20 mm wide; loosely covered in fibrous leaf-sheath remnants. **Culms** 0.45–1–(1.5) m × 1–2.5–4 mm, trigonous, mostly smooth though scabrid below inflorescence. **Basal sheaths** brown. **Leaves** ≥ culms, 5–11 mm wide, double-folded, pale green to light glaucous green, margins finely scabrid. **Inflorescence** 0.2–0.5–1 m long of 7–15 spikes, these either approximate or the lowermost 1–4 distant, occasionally compound, pedunculate; terminal 1–4 spikes male; remaining spikes female, rarely with a few male flowers near their apices, 20–45–60 × 6–8–10 mm. **Glumes** (excluding awn) ≤ utricles, ovate, acute or truncate, membranous with numerous, distinct nerves, colourless (hyaline) except for red-brown striations, and occasional larger dark red-brown markings beside the green midrib; awn scabrid up to 2 mm long. **Utricles** 4.5–5 × 1.5–2 mm, subtrigonous, ellipsoid, distinctly nerved, light greenish brown, margins quite glabrous; beak narrow bifid, c. 1 mm long, crura slightly scabrid; stipe minute. **Stigmas** 3. **Nut** 2 mm long, dark brown, trigonous, oblong.



Chatham Islands. Photographer: Peter J de Lange, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Chatham Islands. Photographer: John Sawyer, Licence: CC BY-NC.

SIMILAR TAXA
Of the three other wide-leaved carices on the Chathams (*C. trifida* Cav., *C. ternaria* Boott in Hook.f., and *C. chathamica* Petrie), *C. ventosa* is perhaps most likely to be confused in the field with *C. trifida*. Ecologically, *C. trifida* is a strictly coastal species frequenting seal haulouts and seabird breeding grounds and roosts, however, in some sites it overlaps with *C. ventosa*, and in such situations rare hybrids have been recorded (these may generally be recognised by their near sterile condition). From *C. ventosa*, *C. trifida* differs in its usually much wider (6–20 mm) dark glaucous leaves, shorter, more sturdy culms and usually larger and broader spikelets (35–50 × 6–15 mm). The glumes of *C. trifida* are consistently emarginated rather than acute, ovate or truncate as in *C. ventosa*. Herbarium specimens of *C. ventosa* have been confused with the peat-bog dwelling *C. chathamica*. From that species *C. ventosa* differs by the near colourless (hyaline) rather than evenly light red-brown coloured glumes, which are of equal length rather than exceeding the length of the utricles. The utricles of *C. ventosa* are more distinctly nerved and beaked than those of *C. chathamica*.

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic, Chatham Islands where it is known from Chatham (Rekohu), Pitt, Mangere, Little Mangere, South East, Star Keys and Rabbit Islands.

HABITAT
A widespread sedge of Chatham Island lowland forest. Not found in deep peat and mainly associated with dune forests, coastal forests and tall scrub.

THREATS
A common, widespread island endemic. It is not threatened on the Chatham Islands.

GENUS
Carex

FAMILY
Cyperaceae

AUTHORITY
Carex ventosa C.B.Clarke

SYNONYMS
Carex mcclurgii Petrie

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

FLOWERING
September–January

FRUITING
October–May

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

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE
Easily grown by division of whole plants and from fresh seed. An attractive sedge ideal for semi-shaded to shaded situations under tall trees or around buildings. Some selection is warranted as some wild populations seen have particularly glaucous foliage.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING
FACU: Facultative Upland
Occasionally is a hydrophyte but usually occurs 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
CARVEN

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = c.62-64

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: IE, RR
2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: IE, RR
2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: IE
2004 | Range Restricted
Jump to current conservation status

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)
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-ventosa/

PDF DATE

27 May 2026