

Carpha alpina

COMMON NAME

carpha

SYNONYMS

None

FAMILY

Cyperaceae

AUTHORITY

Carpha alpina R.Br.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

No

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Sedges

NVS CODE

CARALP

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2012 | Not Threatened

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. Australia and New Zealand. In New Zealand known from the North, South, Stewart and Auckland Islands. In the North Island it is known locally from te Moehau south becoming more common along the main axial ranges and on the volcanic plateau.

HABITAT

Coastal to alpine in bogs, mires and other moderately open shrublands overlying poorly drained soils and peat. in the northern part of its range strictly montane to alpine, descending to the coast on the west coast and southern portion of the South Island, Stewart and Auckland Islands.



Whenuakura, January. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth



Tararua Range. Photographer: Jeremy Rolfe

FEATURES

Tufted perennial sedge. Culms 30-750 x 0.5-1.5 mm, grooved, flaccid or rigid (often with curled or curved apices). Leaves numerous, grey-green or red-green, 50-300 x 0.5-2.0 mm, usually culms, rigid, lamina narrow-linear, flat or concavo-convex, apex obtuse; sheath broad, brown, shining; lower portion of lamina and mouth of sheath minutely serrulate. Inflorescence a terminal corymb, occasionally condensed to form a compact head, or comprising discrete spikelets in 4-6 loose stalked clusters; bracts subtending inflorescence 1-2, foliaceous; bracts subtending spikelets plumose. Spikelets 8-12 mm long, pale and lustrous, 1-flowered. Glumes usually 5, lanceolate, more or less obtuse, stiffly membranous, keeled the 2 lower shorter, the next larger pair subtending the flower, the fifth glume setaceous. Hypogynous bristles 6, plumose with silky hairs almost to the apex, then scabrid, > glumes when mature. Nut 2.5-3.0 mm long, stipitate, pale to dark brown, surmounted by the dried and rigid, long, narrow, smooth or minutely hairy style-base.

SIMILAR TAXA

Carpha has a superficial resemblance to grasses of the genus *Rytidosperma* Steud on account of the plumose bracts subtending the spikelets and also the plumose seta that form a perianth around the flower and later the nut. From *Rytidosperma* it is easily distinguished by the rigidly flat, narrow-linear grey-green or red-green leaves, usually corymbose inflorescence, flowers which lack lemma, palea, and by the distinctive, stipitate nut. *Carpha* cannot be confused however with any other indigenous or naturalised cyperaceous genus.

FLOWERING

November - January

FRUITING

February - May

LIFE CYCLE

Pappate nuts are dispersed by wind (Thorsen et al., 2009).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Although rather slow growing this species is easily cultivated in a pot partially submerged in water. In the wild it is variable with tall and short forms which seem to retain these stature differences in cultivation. From a horticultural perspective some selection from these may be useful. Like many cyperaceous species, *Carpha alpina* resents root disturbance and can be fickle from seed.

ETYMOLOGY

carpha: Straw

alpina: From the Latin alpes 'the Alps', refers to plants growing in mountainous areas

ATTRIBUTION

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

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/carpha-alpina/>