

Carex purpurata

COMMON NAMES

purple bastard grass, tussock hook grass

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Sedges

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Tufted, caespitose, gracile sedge. **Culms** 40–400 × 0.5 mm, finely scabrid below inflorescence; basal bracts dull brown to yellow brown. **Leaves** 3–5 per culm, much < than mature culms in length, 1–2 mm wide, erect or slightly curved, faintly scabrid on the margins and undersides, especially towards the leaf apex. **Spikes** 25–40 × 3–4 mm, ebracteate, female flowers 10–20, close set, becoming rather lax at maturity with internodes up to 5 mm apart near base of spike, 1.5 mm above. **Glumes** mostly $\frac{1}{2}$ – $\frac{3}{4}$ glume length, persistent, broadly ovate, obtuse or lowermost subacute, coriaceous, bright chesnut-brown with a green or light brown midrib and broad, whitish to white-grey hyaline margins. **Utricle** 4.5–5.5 × 1–2 mm, plano-convex, oblong or obovate, dark brown with numerous faint veins, beak 1–1.5 mm long, stipe c. 1 mm long.

SIMILAR TAXA

Perhaps closest to *Carex penalpina* K.A.Ford from which it differs by its much more gracile/slender habit, faintly scabrid leaves and especially by the bright chesnut-brown colour of the glumes. Unlike *Carex penalpina*, the glumes of *C. purpurata* are markedly shorter than the utricles. Despite the specific epithet, *C. purpurata* often has a washed out, whitish green colouration, only the occasional plant is wine-red or purple-tinged. In the field *C. purpurata* can be recognised by the dark spikes, narrowly hyaline glume margin and dark brown almost black immature utricles which fade to chestnut as the utricle matures and spreads. In some examples the glume may be dark chestnut. The leaves of *C. purpurata* are usually much narrower than *C. penalpina* which has more obviously coriaceous and curved leaves that those of *C. purpurata* which are straight to curved and very pliant.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. South Island, Canterbury (Fox Hill), Otago (hills near Dunedin, Ben Lomond, Mt Bengier and other peaks and ranges of Central Otago) and Southland.

HABITAT

A species of damp, open ground under montane forest and subalpine scrub, in tall tussock grassland, in grey scrub and in or near cliff faces. It prefers damp sites in seepages, near small springs or under rock overhangs.

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: Sp, DPS, DPT

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THREATS

This species is never abundant at any particular location and is quite widespread, though rather localised, being a truly biologically sparse, naturally uncommon sedge. It does not appear to have suffered any decline, indeed as a result of field surveys over the last 20 years it is now known to be quite secure and widespread over much of its range.

DETAILED TAXONOMY

FAMILY

Cyperaceae

AUTHORITY

Carex purpurata (Petrie) K.A.Ford



SYNONYMS

Uncinia purpurata Petrie

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

ECOLOGY

FLOWERING

October–November

FRUITING

October–April

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Probably easily grown in a suitably moist, peaty soil.

OTHER INFORMATION

ETYMOLOGY

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

purpurata: Purplish in colour

NVS CODE

CARPUR

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 88

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: Sp

2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: Sp

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon

2004 | Sparse

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Otago: 2024 | At Risk – Regionally Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DPR, DPS, DPT, NR, NStr, Sp, St, TL

REFERENCING AND CITATIONS

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 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.

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

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

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