

Carex uncifolia

COMMON NAMES

sedge

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Sedges

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Shortly rhizomatous, dark purple red to beetroot red, densely tufted sedge 30–70 mm tall. **Culms** completely obscured by light grey-brown, chartaceous, somewhat fibrillose leaf-sheaths. **Leaves** 0.5 mm wide, dark purple-red, maroon red to beetroot red, much > culms, plano-convex, nerved on the undersides, smooth on the upper surface, margins scabrid, apex subobtusate, often curled. **Inflorescence** composed of short densely compacted spikelets, these 3–4–(5), terminal spike male, rather slender, shortly pedunculate, glumes lanceolate, acute, red-brown; remaining spikes female, these sessile, 5–12-flowered, glumes 3.5 × 1.5 mm, dull red-brown, distinctly nerved, lanceolate, acute with the mid rib extending into a scabrid awn. **Utricles** 2–3.5 × 1.5 mm, biconvex to obscurely trigonous, elliptic-lanceolate, spreading when mature, light red-brown, distinctly nerved, narrowed to a more or less scabrid beak 0.5–1 mm long, bidentate, orifice scabrid. **Stigmas** 3. **Nut** 1.5 mm long, dark grey-brown, obtusely trigonous, oblong-obovoid.

SIMILAR TAXA

A well marked species distinguished from the closely allied *C. libera* (Kük.) Hamlin and *C. filamentosa* Petrie by the spikes which lie almost buried within the leaves, sessile female spikes and shortly rhizomatous habit. It could be confused with *C. hectorii* Petrie but that species has much wider, green or reddish-green leaves, and smooth, dark brown mature utricles.

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. North and South Islands. In the North Island known only from the Central Volcanic Plateau from Mt Hauhangatahi and in the nearby Moawhango. In the South Island much more widespread known from the Red Hills, between the Wairau Valley and Nelson, south through Canterbury to Central Otago.

HABITAT

A species of damp seepages, open wetlands and damp turf within tussock grassland. Also abundant in damp sites overlying ultramafic rocks.

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | At Risk – Declining | Qualifiers: Sp, DPR, DPS, DPT, RR

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)

THREATS

Naturally uncommon, this species has a biologically sparse distribution, reaching its greatest abundance on ultramafites on the Red Hills, West Dome and the Livingston Range. Elsewhere it is uncommon and some populations have been lost due to weed invasion, trampling from horses and through vehicle damage.



In cultivation. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 28/02/2009, Licence: CC BY.



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DETAILED TAXONOMY

FAMILY

Cyperaceae

AUTHORITY

Carex uncifolia Cheeseman

SYNONYMS

Carex cardrona Hamlin

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

ECOLOGY

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 from division of whole plants and fresh seed. Best kept in a pot because it is intolerant of competition and slow growing. Does best in a free draining, moist soil, enriched with magnesium. A very attractive and unusual sedge ideal for tub and pot cultivation on patios and verandahs

OTHER INFORMATION

ETYMOLOGY

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

NVS CODE

CARUNC

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = c.60

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: RR, St, Sp

2012 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered | Qualifiers: RR, Sp, St

2009 | Threatened – Nationally Endangered | Qualifiers: RR, St, Sp

2004 | Range Restricted

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Otago: 2024 | Threatened – Regionally Critical | Qualifiers: DPT, NStr, PF, RR, 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.

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. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ppees.2009.06.001>.

ATTRIBUTION

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NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

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

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