

Carex maorica

COMMON NAMES

Māori sedge

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Sedges

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Light green to yellow-green tufted sedge. **Culms** 150–700 × 1.0–2.5 mm., trigonous, smooth or faintly scabrid below inflorescence; basal sheaths light to dark grey, often red-tinged. **Leaves** > culms, to 1 m long, 2–7 mm wide, double-folded, cross-veinlets ± prominent, keel and margins minutely scabrid. **Inflorescence** of 2–5 close-set, sessile, usually erect, occasionally spreading spikes, or the lowest 1–2 rather distant and shortly pedunculate; terminal spike male; remaining spikes female, usually > and overtopping male spike, 20–60 × 7–12 mm, crowded at same level round base of male spike. **Glumes** usually much < utricles, 1–2 mm long, narrowly ovate-lanceolate, margin of upper part fimbriate or lacerate, hyaline with a green midrib produced to a scabrid awn 1–3 mm long, up to 6 mm long in lowermost glumes. **Utricles** 4.0–5.5–(6.0) × 1.0–1.5 mm., plano-convex or biconvex, turgid, ovate or lanceolate, spreading when ripe, shining light green to light brown with numerous distinct white nerves, very slightly tapered above to a beak 1.5–2.0 mm long, with bifid, glabrous orifice, crura c. 1/3 length of entire beak; stipe narrow, c. 0.5 mm long. **Stigmas** 3. **Nut** c. 1.5 mm. long, triquetrous, ellipsoid, cream or light brown.

SIMILAR TAXA

Carex maorica is easily recognised by its slender culms; pale green to yellow green wide leaves; prominent cross-veinlets on sheaths and leaves; and mostly clustered spikelets, and short glumes with lacerate or fimbriate margins; and by the submembranous, strongly nerved, glabrous, spreading utricles. There are only two other carices in New Zealand with cross-veinlets, the indigenous *C. fascicularis* Boott and naturalised *C. lurida* Wahlenberg. *Carex fascicularis* differs from *C. maorica* by the female spikes mostly distant to ± approximate (but then never clustered at one level round base of male spike). *Carex lurida* is a much larger sedge than either species (up to 2.5 m tall) and has utricles 6–9 × 2–4 rather than 4–6 × 1.0–1.5 mm

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: North and South Islands. In the North Island uncommon in the east from East Cape to the Wairarapa otherwise widespread. In the South Island apparently absent from Southland and Fiordland

HABITAT

Coastal to lowland in freshwater wetlands, under willow in gully systems, along river and stream banks, lake margins, and in damp seepages, pond margins and clearings within forest. Preferring fertile to mid-fertile wetlands.

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened

[Jump to previous conservation statuses](#)



Atiwhakatu Valley, Wairarapa. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 02/02/2008, Licence: CC BY.



Utricles. Atiwhakatu Valley, Wairarapa. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 02/02/2008, Licence: CC BY.

DETAILED TAXONOMY

FAMILY

Cyperaceae

AUTHORITY

Carex maorica Hamlin

SYNONYMS

Carex fascicularis Boott var. minor Boott; Carex forsteri Wahl. var. minor (Boott) Hook.f.

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

ECOLOGY

FLOWERING

October—December

FRUITING

November—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 fresh seed and by the division of established plants. Although a wetland species *C. maorica* will grow well in most soils and moisture regimes. Does best in full sun.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

OBL: Obligate Wetland

Almost always is a hydrophyte, rarely in uplands (non-wetlands).

OTHER INFORMATION

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

CARMAO

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = c.72-76

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Otago: 2024 | Threatened – Regionally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: DPR, DPS, DPT, RR, Sp Help

The regional threat classification system leverages off the national assessments in the NZTCS, providing information relevant for the regional context. Otago conservation status information is sourced from the [“Regional conservation status of indigenous vascular plants in Otago”](#) Jarvie S et al. (2024) report.

Auckland: 2025 | Regionally Not Threatened | Qualifiers: DPS, DPT Help

The regional threat classification system leverages off the national assessments in the NZTCS, providing information relevant for the regional context. Auckland conservation status information is sourced from the [“Conservation status of vascular plant species in Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland”](#) Simpkins E et al. (2025) report.

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.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared by P.J. de Lange (12 August 2006). Description adapted from Moore and Edgar (1970).

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MORE INFORMATION

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

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