

# Carex ternaria

## COMMON NAME

southern cutty grass, rautahi

## SYNONYMS

*Carex martinii* Petrie

## FAMILY

Cyperaceae

## AUTHORITY

*Carex ternaria* Boott

## FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

## ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Sedges

## NVS CODE

CARTER

## CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = c.66

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Not Threatened

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

## DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. Chatham, Antipodes and Auckland Islands

## HABITAT

Widespread along stream, lake and pond margins and in seepages, flushes, and around shallow ephemeral pools. Usually in open, well lit situations but also may be fringing streams running through successional forest.

## WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACW: Facultative Wetland

Usually is a hydrophyte but occasionally found in uplands (non-wetlands).



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



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

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Stoutly rhizomatous, widely creeping, robust sedge forming diffuse dark green to dark glaucous green clumps up to 3 m tall. Plants dying back to rhizomes in cold conditions. **Rhizome** 5–10 mm diameter, lignaceous, closely covered with red-brown sheaths. **Culms** 0.3–3.0 m tall, 3–5 mm wide, triquetrous, harshly scabrid; basal sheaths red-brown, margins shredding into fibres with age. **Leaves** > culms, up to 3.2 m long, 4–17 mm wide, double-folded, margins and keel finely scabrid. **Spikes** 7–18, in both sexes varying from 10–80 cm in length, distant, peduncles usually ± = or > spikes, stout, stiff and erect, or more slender and drooping; upper 2–7 spikes male, c. 4–6 mm diameter (excluding very prominent awns); lower spikes female, 5–8 mm. diameter, lowest spikes geminate or ternate. **Glumes** of male spikes ± truncate to acute, with scabrid awns occasionally up to 10 mm long; glumes of female spikes (excluding awn) ± = utricles, narrow-lanceolate to elliptic-lanceolate, acute, red-brown, membranous, with lighter brown, broad midrib prolonged as a finely scabrid awn up to 6 mm long (awn occasionally very dark red). **Utricles** c. 2.0–3.0 × 1.5–2.0 mm., plano-convex to biconvex, elliptic-obovoid, ± turgid, light yellow-brown, sometimes red-brown towards the base, nerves 5 or more on each face, margins smooth; beak c. 0.2–0.4 mm long, often lighter brown, very narrow, orifice glabrous, very slightly bifid; stipe c. 0.3 mm long, narrow. **Stigmas** 2. **Nut** 1.5–2.0 mm long, biconvex, obovoid, lustrous, brown.

## SIMILAR TAXA

In its natural habitat *Carex ternaria* cannot be confused with any other carex species because it is allopatric from its closest relatives *C. coriacea* Hamlin, *C. geminata* Schkuhr, and *C. lessoniana* Steud. However, *C. ternaria* is now occasionally available from plant nurseries and distinction between it and these allied species is not always clear. The most obvious difference is stature as *C. ternaria* is much taller, regularly attaining heights of over 2 m up to a maximum of 3 m. Like *C. coriacea*, it is deciduous (though only in cold weather), and it differs from all three species by its much larger spikes and conspicuously awned glumes.

## FLOWERING

October–December

## FRUITING

December–July

## LIFE CYCLE

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 whole plants. Prefers a permanently damp, acidic soil. Plants die back in cold conditions. An attractive sedge for a large garden where it should be planted on the margin of ponds or slow flowing streams.

## ETYMOLOGY

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

## ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared by P.J. de Lange (10 August 2006). Description adapted from Moore and Edgar (1970)

## 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.

## NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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## MORE INFORMATION

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