

Carex wakatipu

COMMON NAME

sedge

SYNONYMS

None

FAMILY

Cyperaceae

AUTHORITY

Carex wakatipu Petrie

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Sedges

NVS CODE

CARWAK

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Not Threatened

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: South Island except apparently Fiordland. Scarce in Westland.

HABITAT

Mostly upper montane to alpine (450–1800 m a.s.l.). The most commonly encountered, large carex sedge found in snow-tussock (*Chionochloa*) grassland, though it can at times be abundant in short-tussock grassland. It has occasionally been collected from quite low elevations (< 450 m a.s.l.) on lake margins.



Mt Cardrona, January. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Old Man Range. Photographer: John Barkla, Licence: CC BY.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Shortly rhizomatous; very variable in size, tufts dark green, reddish green or yellow-green. **Culms** 40–500 × c. 1 mm, subtrigonous, glabrous or occasionally faintly scabrid below inflorescence, sunk among the leaves or sometimes elongating far beyond the leaves and drooping; basal sheaths dark brown or red-purple, nerves ± distinct. **Leaves** 2–4 mm. wide, ± erect or spreading, channelled, margins scarcely scabrid at base with well-spaced teeth towards tip. **Spikes** 4–(6), closely packed, at about the same level on the culm; terminal spike male, much more slender than and usually > female spikes; female spikes male at the base and occasionally at the top, 10–20 × c. 5 mm, shortly pedunculate. **Glumes** slightly < utricles, broadly ovate, usually emarginate, sometimes almost entire, occasionally red-brown, usually very light brown flecked with darker brown striae, membranous, midrib very broad, very pale brown, produced to a short scabrid awn. **Utricles** 2.5–3.0 × c. 2.0 mm, plano-convex or unequally biconvex, broadly elliptic-ovoid, pale brown flecked with red-brown striae below, or darker brown throughout, occasionally almost black, turgid, nerved, margins usually glabrous; beak c. 0.3 mm long with a broad, ciliate, shortly bifid orifice; stipe c. 0.2 mm long. **Stigmas** 2. **Nut** slightly > 1.5 mm long, biconvex, almost orbicular.

SIMILAR TAXA

Vegetatively *Carex wakatipu* is extremely variable. It is chiefly recognised by a combination of having dark green, yellow-green or reddish green channelled leaves which are distinctly keeled on the lower surface; a closely packed (congested) inflorescence with female spikes 10–20 × c. 5 mm; and very broad glumes and utricles. The utricles are distinctly turgid. Nevertheless these characters encompass a wide range of variation with respect to growth habit, and whether or not the culms elongate at maturity or remain hidden within the leaves. Much of this variation appears genetic, and distinct races (some of which are sympatric) exist which could be segregated from this species.

FLOWERING

October–December

FRUITING

November–April

LIFE CYCLE

Nuts surrounded by inflated utricles are dispersed by granivory and wind (Thorsen et al., 2009).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from the division of whole plants and from fresh seed. Best suited for a well drained, sunny site but permanently damp situation. This species dislikes humidity.

ETYMOLOGY

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

WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available.

NOTES ON TAXONOMY

Carex wakatipu as currently circumscribed is extremely variable and it is likely that further entities may be segregated from it in the near future.

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-wakatipu/>