

Carex coriacea

COMMON NAME

cutty grass, rautahi

SYNONYMS

Carex ternaria var. *pallida* Cheeseman, *C. ternaria* f. *pallida* (Cheeseman) Kük.

FAMILY

Cyperaceae

AUTHORITY

Carex coriacea Hamlin

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Sedges

NVS CODE

CARCOR

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Not Threatened

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. New Zealand: North, South and Stewart Islands from Pureora and the Kaingaroa Plain south. In the South Island widespread though more common on the eastern side.

HABITAT

Coastal to alpine (up to 1600 m a s.l.). Usually in damp seepages in grassland or on swampy river flats, sometimes a persistent weed in pasture.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACW: Facultative Wetland

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



Silica Springs. Photographer: Mike Wilcox, Licence: All rights reserved.



Silica springs track, Ruapehu. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Rhizomatous; summer-green perennial, in coarse yellow-green, glossy, distant tufts, 0.2–1.2 m tall, borne on a hard, woody rhizome 5–12 mm diameter. **Culms** 1.5–3.0 mm diameter, trigonous, scabrid below inflorescence; basal sheaths membranous, grey-brown, yellow-brown or dull red-brown, margins shredding into fibres wrapped round the culm. **Leaves** much > culms, 4–9 mm wide, double-folded, stiff, coriaceous, hard, glossy, margins closely scabrid. **Spikes** 8–15, pendulous on filiform peduncles usually much > spike; 2–6 uppermost spikes male, 2–3 mm diameter, glumes hardly awned; remaining spikes female, occasionally male at the top, geminate or ternate, rarely quinate, lower spikes the longest, 20–100 × c. 5 mm. **Glume** (excluding awn) < utricles, narrow-ovate or obovate, with a short hispid awn, coriaceous, red-brown, margins narrow-hyaline; midrib broad, 3-nerved, light brown. **Utricle** 1.9–3.3 × 1.2–2.0 mm, unequally biconvex, orbicular or broadly ovoid, yellow-green or light grey-brown, green towards the tip, faintly nerved but with prominent lateral ridges, margins smooth, gradually narrowed to a short beak c. 0.3 mm long, orifice entire; stipe c. 0.5 mm long. **Stigmas** 2. **Nut** slightly < 1.5 mm long, c. $\frac{3}{4}$ length of utricles, biconvex, orbicular or oblong-ovoid, dark brown to black.

SIMILAR TAXA

Carex coriacea is allied to *C. ternaria* Boott, *C. lessoniana* Steud. and *C. geminata* Schkuhr. From all these species it is best distinguished by the glossy, yellow-green leaves, smooth, yellow-green utricles and by the nut which is usually c. $\frac{3}{4}$ the length of the utricles. Further *Carex ternaria* is confined to the Chatham and Subantarctic islands outside the range of *C. coriacea*, while ecologically *C. lessoniana* and *C. geminata* are more typical of lowland wetlands or damp sites within forest. Only rarely do the ranges of *C. lessoniana* and *C. geminata* overlap with *C. coriacea*.

FLOWERING

October–December

FRUITING

December–May

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 established plants. However, because of its extensively rhizomatous nature it needs plenty of room to spread. Although a wetland species *C. coriacea* will grow well in most soils and moisture regimes. Does best in full sun.

ETYMOLOGY

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

coriacea: Leathery

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-coriacea/>