

Carex pumila

COMMON NAMES

sand sedge

BIOSTATUS

Native

CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Sedges

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Deep blue-green to glaucous, tufted sedge; tufts coarse, arising from a long, wiry creeping rhizome of c. 2 mm diameter. **Culms** mostly buried in sand, 50–300 mm long, terete, smooth, cream or light green, almost entirely enclosed by light brown or cream, occasionally red-brown leaf-sheaths. **Leaves** > culms, up to 400 mm long, 1.5–3 mm. wide, channelled, rigid, glaucous, curved and tapering to a fine point, margins mostly smooth. **Spikes** 3–8, ± approximate; terminal spike male, often long-pedunculate, very slender, often with 1–3 very small, occasionally partly female, spikes at the base; remaining spikes female, often male at the top, 10–35 × c. 10 mm. **Glumes** c. ½ length of utricles, rarely only slightly < utricles, ovate, acute, red-brown, with broad colourless hyaline margins, midrib very pale brown, thickened, usually produced to a short awn. **Utricles** 6.0–7.5 × 2.0–3.5 mm, biconvex to subtrigonal, ovoid, light brown, thick, corky, turgid, smooth or faintly nerved, narrowed to a bifid beak, 1.5–2.0 mm long, orifice membranous, crura faintly scabrid at tip. **Stigmas** 3. **Nut** 2.5–4.0 × 1.5–2.5 mm., trigonal, obovoid, light brown, shortly mucronate.

SIMILAR TAXA

None. The long, creeping, wiry rhizome, channeled, smooth-edged glaucous leaves and distinctly corky utricles are especially diagnostic.

DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. New Zealand: North, South and Chatham Islands. Uncommon in parts of the South Island. Also recorded from Australia, Lord Howe Island, Chile, China, Japan and Korea.

HABITAT

Mostly coastal, rarely extending inland. A species of mobile sand dunes, sand flats and dune slacks (swales). Sometimes found fringing the sandy margins of coastal rivers and lagoons. Occasionally found as an urban lawn weed, especially in coastal settlements.

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO

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DETAILED TAXONOMY

FAMILY

Cyperaceae

AUTHORITY

Carex pumila Thunb.



Papatowai Beach. Photographer: John Barkla, Licence: CC BY.



Te Paki stream, Northland. Photographer: John Sawyer, Date taken: 01/12/2009, Licence: CC BY-NC.

SYNONYMS

Carex littorea Labill.; Carex pumila Thunb. subsp. littorea (Labill.) Kük.

ENDEMIC TAXON

No

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

ECOLOGY

FLOWERING

October–December

FRUITING

December–June

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

Spongy utricles dispersed by water and wind (Thorsen et al., 2009).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from fresh seed and by division of established plants. Will grow in most soils and conditions but does best in a freely draining medium in full sun. Some wild populations rarely set seed, and some selection of wild forms is merited. An excellent and highly under-rated sand binder.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FAC: Facultative

Commonly occurs as either a hydrophyte or non-hydrophyte (non-wetlands).

OTHER INFORMATION

ETYMOLOGY

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

pumila: Small

NVS CODE

CARPUM

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 82

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Otago: 2024 | Regionally Not Threatened

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 for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (10 August 2006). Description adapted from Moore and Edgar (1970)

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NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

Please cite as: de Lange, P.J. (Year at time of access): *Carex pumila* Fact Sheet (content continuously updated). New Zealand Plant Conservation Network. <https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/carex-pumila/> (Date website was queried)

MORE INFORMATION

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

PDF DATE

11 March 2025