

# Carex echinata

## COMMON NAME

star sedge

## SYNONYMS

*Carex stellulata* Good.; *Carex stellulata* Good. var. *australis* Kük.

## FAMILY

Cyperaceae

## AUTHORITY

*Carex echinata* Murr.

## FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

## ENDEMIC TAXON

No

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Sedges

## NVS CODE

CARECH

## CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = c.58

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

## DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. New Zealand: North, South and South Islands from about Te Moehau south. Apparently absent from Marlborough.

## HABITAT

Coastal to alpine (though mainly montane to alpine in northern part of range). Common in wetlands such as bogs and mires or on stream banks and around tarn margins. Descending to sea level in the south-west of the South Island and on Stewart Island.

## WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

OBL: Obligate Wetland

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



Herbarium specimen: AK 289631.

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Herbarium specimen: AK 289631.

Photographed with permission of Auckland

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Loosely tufted from an ascending rhizome; tufts ± flaccid. **Culms** 35–350 × c. 0.5 mm, subtrigonal, glabrous; basal sheaths grey or light brown.

**Leaves** usually < culms, 0.5–1.5 mm wide, channelled to flat, margins scabrid, tapering towards the subacute tip. **Inflorescence** a compound spike 15–40 mm long, green or pale brown, of 3–5 ± distant spikes, utricles widely spreading when ripe and individual spikes star-shaped; lowest spike usually subtended by a filiform scabrid bract c. ½ length of inflorescence. **Spikes** androgynous, 3–7 mm long, male flowers at the base of each spike; plants occasionally almost dioecious. **Glume** c. ½ length of utricle, membranous, light brown, with a pale cream or green well-marked midrib and hyaline margins. **Utricles** 2.5–4.0 × c. 1.5 mm, plano-convex, usually distinctly nerved; contracted above to a narrow, dark brown beak with green, slightly or distinctly scabrid margins and slightly bifid orifice; puckered below to a rather indistinct stipe c. 2 mm long. **Stigmas** 2. **Nut** slightly < 2 mm long, ± biconvex, oblong-ovoid, pale brown.

## SIMILAR TAXA

A distinctive species that is easily recognised by the star-shaped arrangement of the mature spreading utricles. This is clearly seen when the plants are viewed from above. *Carex echinata* has no obvious close relatives in New Zealand and is unlikely to be confused with any of the introduced or indigenous species known from this country.

## FLOWERING

October–December

## FRUITING

November–July (often present throughout the year)

## LIFE CYCLE

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

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easy from fresh seed and the division of whole plants. Prefers moist soils, with a sunny aspect, free from weeds.

## ETYMOLOGY

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

**echinata**: From the Latin 'echinus' for hedgehog, meaning armed with spines.

## WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available.

## 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-echinata/>