

Carex colensoi

COMMON NAME

Colenso's sedge

SYNONYMS

Carex picta Colenso

FAMILY

Cyperaceae

AUTHORITY

Carex colensoi Boott in Hook.f.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Sedges

NVS CODE

CARCOL

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = c.60-64

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Not Threatened

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. North (from northern Kaimanawa Ranges south, uncommon) and South Islands.

HABITAT

Mostly montane to subalpine in short- tussock and tall-tussock grassland. Especially common in the drier intermontane basins of the eastern South Island.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACU: Facultative Upland

Occasionally is a hydrophyte but usually occurs in uplands (non-wetlands).



Inflorescence. In cultivation ex Hawkdun Range. Dec 1986. Photographer: Colin C. Ogle, Licence: CC BY-NC.



Banks Peninsula. Photographer: Alice Shanks, Licence: CC BY-NC.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Patchy, diffuse long trailing light green, grass-like, rather slender tufted sedge arising from a long-creeping rhizome. **Rhizome** 2–3 mm diameter, woody, often much branched and knotted, with shoots spaced singly and evenly along it, 1.0–1.5 mm diameter at base. **Culms** rather variable in height, 40–450 × c. 0.5 mm, trigonous, flaccid, glabrous; basal sheaths cream, grey, or light brown. **Leaves** usually < culms, occasionally = or > culms, 0.5–1.5 mm wide, soft, grass-like, channelled, occasionally almost flat, margins minutely serrulate just below trigonous tip. **Inflorescence** 10–15 mm long, of 1–4 clustered, shortly-peduncled, chestnut-brown spikes, subtended by a green, filiform, leaf-like bract, much > inflorescence, with margins minutely serrulate. **Spikes** androgynous, 7–10 × 2–5 mm, ovoid, male flowers at the base. **Glumes** = or slightly > utricles, ovate, subacute, brown, with a broad green midrib and broad silver hyaline margins. **Utricles** 2.5–3.5 × 1.5–2.0 mm, plano-convex, occasionally almost subtrigonous when mature, brown, shining, with nerves not distinct, margin of upper part finely scabrid; beak hardly developed, c.0.5 mm long; stipe c.0.5 mm long. **Stigmas** 2. **Nut** c. 1.5 mm long, ± biconvex, elliptic-oblong to orbicular, brown with a distinct stipe c. 0.2 mm long.

SIMILAR TAXA

Perhaps most similar to *Carex inversa* R.Br., from which it is distinguished by the long trailing habit, very slender, light-green rather than shortly creeping, dark to yellow-green culms topped by relatively large inflorescences composed of 1–4, clustered brown rather than 2–5 pale green to light yellow-brown spikes, bearing scarcely beaked utricles with indistinct nervation rather than prominently beaked and nerved.

FLOWERING

October–December

FRUITING

November–May

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 to a well-drained, sunny site in dry climates. Dislikes humidity and soon dies if kept too moist. An unusual sedge well worth cultivating.

ETYMOLOGY

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

colensoi: Named after William Colenso (7 November 1811 - 10 February 1899) who was a Cornish Christian missionary to New Zealand, and also a printer, botanist, explorer and politician.

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-colensoi/>