

Carex appressa

COMMON NAME

southern cutty grass, tussock sedge

SYNONYMS

Carex appressa R.Br. var. *appressa*; *Carex paniculata* L. var. *appressa* (R.Br.) Cheeseman

FAMILY

Cyperaceae

AUTHORITY

Carex appressa R.Br.

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

No

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Sedges

NVS CODE

CARAPP

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 60-62

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. North Island (Cook Strait region only), South Island (scattered, more common in the southern regions), Stewart Island/Rakiura, Chatham Islands, Antipodes Islands, Auckland Islands and Campbell Island/Motu Ihupuku. Also New Caledonia, Australia and New Guinea. Naturalised around Auckland City.

HABITAT

Mostly coastal, extending to montane in the subantarctic islands. Preferring open situations, usually on the margins of peat bogs or peaty, slow-flowing streams.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

OBL: Obligate Wetland

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



In cultivation. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 01/11/2003, Licence: CC BY.



Carex appressa, naturalised plant, Selcourt Street, Mt Albert, Auckland, October 2005. Photographer: Peter J. de Lange, Licence: CC BY-NC.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Stout, rhizomatous sedge, forming robust, harsh and rigid, dark green tussocks. **Culms** 0.2–1.4 m tall, 3.0–6.5 mm wide, acutely trigonous, angles prominently scabrid above; basal sheaths shining, light to dark grey-brown, rarely purple-brown. **Leaves** usually > culms, 3–7 mm wide, channelled, stiffly erect, immature leaves with pungent apices, margins and keel very scabrid. **Inflorescence** an erect, elongated, mostly compact, stiff panicle 60–250 × 10–30 mm, usually interrupted below, branchlets us. < 35 mm long, more crowded above, appressed to inflorescence axis. **Spikes** 5–6 mm long, red-brown, ovoid, androgynous, male flowers terminal. **Glumes** slightly < utricles, ovate, acute, often furnished with a short scabrid mucro, brown with lighter brown midrib. **Utricles** c. 2.5–3.5 × 1.5 mm, plano-convex, conspicuously many-nerved, dark brown; tapered to a beak 1.0–1.5 mm long, margins distinctly toothed, orifice bifid; sharply constricted to a narrow stipe 2–4 mm. long. **Stigmas** 2. **Nut** c. 1.5 mm. long, plano-convex, oblong-obovoid, light or dark brown.

SIMILAR TAXA

Carex appressa most closely resembles *C. virgata* Sol. ex Boott, especially as the inflorescence of both species is a stiffly erect contracted panicle, further, both species have similar distinctly nerved utricles. However, *C. virgata* has more slender culms, narrower leaves and paler brown, less dense-flowered panicles. In *C. appressa* the utricles are > 2.5 mm long while those of *C. virgata* are < 2.5 mm long. On the Chatham Islands *C. appressa* appears to intergrade, or hybridise, with *C. virgata*.

FLOWERING

September–December

FRUITING

December–June

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 whole plants. Will tolerate most conditions but does best in full sun in a permanently damp soil. Rather variable and some horticultural selection is warranted. The typical form with stiffly erect, densely compacted inflorescences is perhaps the most attractive.

ETYMOLOGY

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

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange (110 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-appressa/>