

# Carex capillacea

## COMMON NAME

sedge

## SYNONYMS

*Carex rara* subsp. *capillacea* (Boott) Kük., *C. wallii* Petrie

## FAMILY

Cyperaceae

## AUTHORITY

*Carex capillacea* Boott

## FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

## ENDEMIC TAXON

No

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Sedges

## NVS CODE

CARCAP

## CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = c.60

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: DP, SO, Sp

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: SO, Sp

2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon

2004 | Sparse

## DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. North and South Islands. In the North confined to the Volcanic Plateau (the Waimarino Plain), and the Moawhango. In the South Island more widespread from Nelson and western Marlborough south to Lakes Te Anau, Manapouri, Hauroko and east to Lumsden. Probably more widespread as it is easily overlooked. Also known from Australia, New Guinea, Malesia, China, Japan and India.

## HABITAT

Favouring cushion bog, sphagnum bog, seepages, flushes and the margins of ponds, pools, tarns and on seasonally flooded river terraces within montane forest, scrub, and tussock grassland.

## 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: 21/10/2007, Licence: CC BY.



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## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Diminutive, shortly rhizomatous, somewhat flaccid, tufted, matted bright green to yellow-green sedge of damp forest hollows, river terrace wetlands and cushion bogs. **Culms** 4–10–30 × 0.5–0.7 mm, usually curved (sickle-shaped), plano-convex to terete, smooth; basal sheaths light brown or grey-brown. **Leaves** < culms, up to 0.5 mm wide, plano-convex to involute, yellow-green, glossy, margins finely scabrid near the acute apex. **Inflorescence** solitary, terminal spike 5–8 × 3–4 mm, ovate, usually ebracteate, sometimes with the lowermost glume bractiform; female flowers 6–10–(12), male flowers in a terminal spikelet 3 mm long. **Glumes** < utricles, ovate, obtuse, pale brown, midrib green. **Utricles** 2 × 1 mm, plano-convex or biconvex, ovoid, green, membranous, nerved, margins glabrous, beak c. 0.5 mm long, crura truncate or notched, glabrous, stipe absent or wanting. **Stigmas** 3. **Nut** 1.5 mm long, pale cream, bluntly trigonous, ovoid, surface distinctly reticulate pitted; style-base persistent.

## SIMILAR TAXA

Within the New Zealand species *C. capillacea* is the only species placed within Section Capitellatae of Subgenus *Carex* and of all the New Zealand carices it is most likely to be confused with the four species of Subgenus *Primocarex* (*C. acicularis* Boott in Hook.f., *C. enysii* Petrie, *C. allanii* Hamlin and *C. pyrenaica* var. *cephalotes* (F.Muell.) Kük.) all of which possess a unispicate inflorescence. From these carices *C. capillacea* is readily distinguished by its bright-green to yellow-green, somewhat flaccid, matted habit, and by the sessile, membranous utricles which are rarely longer than 2 mm. As the spikelet is usually ebracteate it could be confused with *C. pyrenaica* var. *cephalotes* but that species has distinctly coriaceous, stipitate utricles 2.5–5 mm long.

## FLOWERING

October–December

## FRUITING

October–July

## LIFE CYCLE

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

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from rooted pieces, divisions of whole plants, and fresh seed. An attractive small sedge with rather unusual solitary spikes. Does best in a small pot kept permanently moist. Dislikes prolonged dry conditions and humidity.

## THREATS

Biologically sparse and naturally uncommon. This species has a somewhat disjunct distribution. It does not appear to be threatened at the majority of the known sites but it is vulnerable to competition from weeds.

## ETYMOLOGY

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

**capillacea**: From the Latin capillus 'hair' or 'thread', meaning hair-like or thread-like

## ATTRIBUTION

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. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ppees.2009.06.001>.

## MORE INFORMATION

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