

Carex divulsa

COMMON NAME

grey sedge

FAMILY

Cyperaceae

AUTHORITY

Carex divulsa Stokes

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Exotic

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Sedges

NVS CODE

CARDIV

CONSERVATION STATUS

Not applicable

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Dense grass-like, dark green tussock, up to 50 cm tall, with longer flower spikes, the spikes are made up of small groups of small green flowers on a thin arching stem. (Despite its common name, plants in NZ are mid-green to yellow green, not grey.)

DISTRIBUTION

Scattered throughout the North Island and Nelson, Marlborough and Canterbury; Chatham Islands.

HABITAT

Widespread from the coast to subalpine situations. Usually found as a pasture and lawn weed with a distinct preference for calcareous or other base-rich substrates. Will colonise forest especially forest margins and gaps. A serious weed in native vegetation.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FAC: Facultative

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

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Dense, dark-green to yellow-green, deeply rooted grass-like tussock-forming sedge. **Rhizome** thick, short, ascending with dark brown scales soon becoming fibrous. **Stems** 0.15–1.8 m high, slender and wiry, 3-angled, scabrid on angles. **Leaves** 2–3 mm wide, < stems, flat to channelled, rather harshly scabrid, sheaths dull, light creamy-brown. **Inflorescence** 50–120 mm long, often with 1–2 very short branches at base; spikes \pm 10, sessile, light green, distant below, 3–5 uppermost more crowded; bracts filiform. **Spikes** few-flowered, androgynous, male flowers at top. **Glumes** much < utricles, ovate, acuminate, colourless-hyaline with a green midrib. **Utricles** 4–5 \times \pm 2 mm, ovate, plano-convex, nerveless, light brown, tapering to a short bifid beak with scabrid margins, stipe minute. **Stigmas** 2. **Nut** obovoid, biconvex.



Coromandel. Oct. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



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SIMILAR TAXA

The mixed-sex flower spikes resemble those of the native *C. virgata* and *C. secta*, but *C. divulsa* is much smaller and the leaf margins are not cutting.

FLOWERING

Late spring

FLOWER COLOURS

Brown, Green

FRUITING

Summer

LIFE CYCLE

Long-lived perennial sedge. Seed dispersed by contaminated machinery or garden discards.

YEAR NATURALISED

1883

ORIGIN

Europe, North Asia, North Africa

REASON FOR INTRODUCTION

Ornamental plant

CONTROL TECHNIQUES

Not difficult to hand-pull - take the plants (or at least the seed heads) away and destroy them. Not often controlled in New Zealand.

TOLERANCES

Cold and drought tolerant—can tolerate a wide range of soils types.

ETYMOLOGY

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

ATTRIBUTION

Factsheet prepared by Paul Champion and Deborah Hofstra (NIWA).

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Champion P. et al. 2020. Freshwater Invasive Species of New Zealand 2020. NIWA publication.

<https://docs.niwa.co.nz/library/public/FreInSpec.pdf>

Healy AJ, Edgar E. 1980. Flora of New Zealand, Volume III. Adventive Cyperaceous, Petalous and Spathaceous Monocotyledons. Government Printer, Wellington, NZ. 220 p.

Johnson PN, Brooke PA. 1989. Wetland plants in New Zealand. DSIR Field Guide, DSIR Publishing, Wellington, NZ. 319 p.

MORE INFORMATION

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