

# Carex rubicunda

## COMMON NAME

sedge

## SYNONYMS

*Carex novae-zelandiae* Petrie; *Carex petriei* Cheeseman var. *rubicunda* (Petrie) Kük.

## FAMILY

Cyperaceae

## AUTHORITY

*Carex rubicunda* Petrie

## FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

## ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Sedges

## NVS CODE

CARRUB

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: DP, EF, RR

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: DP, RR

2009 | Threatened – Nationally Vulnerable | Qualifiers: DP

2004 | Range Restricted

## DISTRIBUTION

Endemic. North and South Islands. In the North Island known from swamps in the southern Kaingaroa Plain, the Kaimanawa and Ruahine Mountains, and wetlands within Tongariro National Park. Its exact distribution in the South Island is still unclear. It has long been known from Lakes Te Anau and Manapouri, and in 2009–2010 was found at Lake Lyndon (Canterbury) and Lake Wanaka (Otago). It is likely to be found at other sites.

## HABITAT

A species of mainly montane to subalpine lake, tarn, and pond margins. Also found in other ephemeral wetlands, often in places seasonally flooded.

## WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACW: Facultative Wetland

Usually is a hydrophyte but occasionally found in uplands (non-wetlands).



Green Form. Ex L. Wanaka. Photographer: John Barkla, Licence: CC BY.



Thomson Mountains, Otago. Photographer: Jesse Bythell, Date taken: 20/02/2023, Licence: CC BY-NC.

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Diminutive, shortly rhizomatous, stiffly erect, reddish brown tufted sedge with curled leaf apices frequenting lake, pond, and tarn margins, flushes, slow flowing stream and seepage in montane to subalpine conditions. **Culms** 10–150 × 0.5–1 mm, glabrous, terete, basal sheaths light brown to grey brown. **Leaves** much longer than culms, 30–300 × 0.5–1 mm, red to red-brown, rigid, plano-convex, occasionally with margins inrolled, striated on undersides, margins finely scabrid, leaf apex obtuse, twisted and curled when dry. **Inflorescence** 10–15 mm long, usually hidden within foliage towards base of plant. **Spikes** 3–4–(6), shortly pedunculate to almost sessile, pale yellow-brown, terminal spike wholly male, subterminal spike female or with some males near apex, remaining spikes female, 5–10 × 3 mm, clustered at the same level round base of male spike, all subtended by leaf-like bracts, these about same length as leaves. **Glumes** slightly  $\leq$  utricles, ovate, membranous, nerved, pale pink, maturing brown, with green midribs, apices acute. **Utricles** 1.5–2 × 1 mm, plano-convex, obovoid, smooth or faintly nerved, gradually narrowed at either end, light brown below, trending to darker purple-brown toward the 0.3 mm long glabrous beak, apex hardly bifid, crura minutely scabrid; stipe 0.5 mm long. **Stigmas** 2. **Nut** about 1 mm long, obovoid to suborbicular, pale grey-brown.

## SIMILAR TAXA

In some respects *C. rubicunda* is perhaps closest to *C. petriei* Cheeseman from which it differs by its red, curly-tipped rather than twisted leaves, female flowers bearing 2 rather than 3 stigmas, and by the scarcely beaked rather than distinctly beaked, grey brown rather than dull brown, obovoid to suborbicular rather than oblong-obovoid, utricle. It could also be confused with *C. cirrhosa* Bergg., from which it differs by its (usually) smaller stature, and smooth or faintly nerved rather than distinctly nerved, utricle which tapers to a minute beak (0.3 mm long), rather than an abruptly narrowed utricle terminating in a > 0.5 mm long beak. The utricles of *C. rubicunda* are usually much < 2 mm long, whilst those of *C. cirrhosa* are typically > 2 mm long. The two species are occasionally found growing together.

## FLOWERING

October–January

## FRUITING

October–August

## 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. A diminutive species best suited for cultivation in pots within an alpine house or in a rockery. It requires permanently moist soil to flourish and prefers full sun. It is intolerant of much competition and dislikes humidity.

## THREATS

A locally common species of suitable habitats within the Central North Island. Some populations might be at risk from horse trampling, vehicle traffic and invasive wetland weeds. Status in the South Island needs clarification.

## ETYMOLOGY

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

## WHERE TO BUY

Not commercially available

## 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.

## MORE INFORMATION

