

# Carex subtilis

## COMMON NAME

handsome bastard grass, handsome hook sedge

## SYNONYMS

*Uncinia elegans* (Kük.) Hamlin; *Uncinia sinclairii* Boott var. *elegans* Kük.;  
*Uncinia macrolepis* Decne var. *elegans* (Kük.) Kük.

## FAMILY

Cyperaceae

## AUTHORITY

*Carex subtilis* K.A.Ford

## FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

## ENDEMIC TAXON

No

## ENDEMIC GENUS

No

## ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

## STRUCTURAL CLASS

Sedges

## NVS CODE

UNCELE

## CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 94

## CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: DP, SO, Sp

## PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

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

2009 | Data Deficient | Qualifiers: SO

2004 | Sparse

## DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. South Island, from Canterbury south through Otago to Fiordland. Also recorded from Tasmania.

## HABITAT

A very uncommon upper montane to subalpine species of short tussock grassland, or shady locations under scrub and under low rock overhangs. Sometimes in open dry rocky ground.

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Shortly rhizomatous, spreading sedge form loose turfs. **Rhizome** 1–1.5 mm diameter. **Culms** 40–300 × 0.5–1 mm, erect, usually glabrous, occasionally weakly scabrid just below inflorescence; basal bracts dull grey-brown. **Leaves** 4–10 per culm, < or ± = culms in length, 1–2 mm wide, soft, somewhat flaccid. **Spikes** 15–30 × 2–4 mm, cylindrical, ebracteate, female flowers about 10, close-set with lower ones usually lax. **Glumes** slightly < utricles, persistent, obtuse, coriaceous, straw-yellow with brown flecks and/or markings, or dark brown or brown tinged, midrib green. **Utricles** 4–5 × 1–1.5 mm, plano-convex, obovate-oblong, grey-brown with dark brown nerves, finely hispid on margins and both surfaces of upper half, beak tapering c. 1 mm long, stipe scarcely narrowed, 0.4–0.5 mm long.



## SIMILAR TAXA

Closest to *Carex parvispica* K.A.Ford from which it mainly differs by the narrower leaves, spikes and more distinctly nerved utricles. In *Carex subtilis* the glumes are often dark brown or brown tinged, those of *C. parvispica* are uniformly straw-coloured. *Carex subtilis* is smaller with narrower leaves, the spike is narrow, utricles not or little divergent and with truly scabrid (sometimes sparsely so) margin, glume usually a bit less than utricule. *Carex subtilis* prefers to grow in drier shady sites than *C. parvispica*. *Carex parvispica* is larger with wider leaves, spike wider, and the utricles divergent when mature with an almost ciliate margin, glume = utricule, and prefers damp situations.

## FLOWERING

November–December

## FRUITING

November–June

## PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Unknown.

## THREATS

Believed to be a naturally uncommon, ecologically sparse species. However it is poorly known from large parts of its reported range. Further survey to ascertain its exact status is much desired.

## 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 (1979). Fact sheet prepared by Peter J. de Lange 17 August 2006.

## 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.

## NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

Please cite as: de Lange, P.J. (Year at time of access): *Carex subtilis* Fact Sheet (content continuously updated). New Zealand Plant Conservation Network. <https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/carex-subtilis/> (Date website was queried)

## MORE INFORMATION

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