

Carex virgata

COMMON NAME

swamp sedge, pukio, toitoi, toetoe

SYNONYMS

Carex paniculata var. *virgata* (Boott) Cheeseman; *Carex appressa* var. *virgata* (Boott) Kük.

FAMILY

Cyperaceae

AUTHORITY

Carex virgata Sol. ex Boott

FLORA CATEGORY

Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Sedges

NVS CODE

CARVIR

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2017 | Not Threatened

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. New Zealand: North, South, Stewart and Chatham Islands.

HABITAT

Widespread from sea level to about 1000 m a.s.l. in open, swampy conditions and also in damp sites within lowland forest. In parts of the country this sedge is often the dominant carice of lowland alluvial forest.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACW: Facultative Wetland

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



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



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

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Rhizomatous, densely clumped to tussock-forming sedge. **Rhizome** 5 mm. diameter. **Culms** 150–900 mm. × c. 1.5 mm, trigonous, grooved, harshly scabrid; basal sheaths shining, grey-brown to dark brown, sometimes black. **Leaves** much > culms, 0.5–1.2 m tall, 1.5–4.5 mm wide, channelled, light green, harsh and rigid, keel and margins strongly scabrid. **Inflorescence** a narrow 100–260 mm long panicle with stiff erect branchlets, the lower-most quite distant. **Spikes** androgynous, 4–6 mm. long, sessile, grey- or yellow-brown, male flowers terminal, lower spikes on each branchlet subtended by a pale membranous bract with a long scabrid awn often > spike. **Glume** ± = or slightly < utricles, membranous, ovate, acute, dull brown, with a prominent pale midrib, this often scabrid in lowermost glumes. **Utricles** 2.0–2.5 × c. 1.0 mm, plano-convex, ovoid, light grey with distinct brown nerves; tapering to a brown beak c. 0.5 mm long with a bifid orifice and conspicuously denticulate margins; abruptly contracted to a narrow stipe c. 0.2 mm. long. **Stigmas** 2. **Nut** slightly > 1 mm. long, biconvex, ovoid, dark brown.

SIMILAR TAXA

Carex virgata most closely resembles *C. appressa* R.Br., especially as the inflorescence of both species is a stiff 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. Plants of *C. virgata* could also be confused with *C. secta* Boott as they can occasionally become elevated on trunks formed by matted rhizomes and semi-decayed culms. However, in such rare examples of *C. virgata*, plants never attain the height reached by *C. secta*. Further, the inflorescences of *C. virgata* are never drooping, and obviously branched, with the basal branchlets often distant.

FLOWERING

October–December

FRUITING

December–May

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 established plants. A fast growing sedge often popular in wetland restoration and riparian plantings.

ETYMOLOGY

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

virgata: Twiggy

NOTES ON TAXONOMY

On the Chatham Islands *C. virgata* either hybridises, or appears to intergrade, with *C. appressa*.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet prepared by P.J. de Lange (10 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-virgata/>