



Carex perplexa

Common Name(s):

Surville Cliffs Bastard Grass

Current Threat Status (2012):

At Risk - Naturally Uncommon

Distribution:

Endemic. North Island, North Cape, Surville Cliffs, where it is only known from one small area of the 120 ha exposure of ultramafic rock.

Habitat:

Ultramafic rock and talus in shaded sites under pohutukawa (*Metrosideros excelsa* Sol. ex Gaertn.) trees. Usually found growing with *Carex ophiolithica* de Lange et Heenan.

Features*:

Tufted sedge of ultramafic habitats forming large, spreading clumps. Culms 400-500 x 0.7-0.9 mm, glabrous, trigonous, > leaves; leaf-sheaths 30 mm or less, yellow-brown, nerves light brown. Leaves 6-11 per culm, 200-550 x 2-5 mm, weakly channelled, green; upper surface keeled, keel scabrid, margin scabrid, apex acute, trigonous, scabrid. Spikes linear, up to 55 mm long, 2-3 mm wide, usually subtended by 1 leaf-like bract 15-95 x 0.2-1.2 mm; female florets proximal, 15-24, internodes 3.5 mm long at spike base decreasing to 0.6 mm above; male florets distal, 15-20, overlapping. Male glumes 3.5-4 x 1 mm, narrow elliptic-lanceolate, light brown. Female glumes 3.5-4 x 1-1.2 mm, elliptic lanceolate to narrow elliptic, deciduous, light brown. Utricles 4.2-4.3 x 1.2-1.3 mm, planoconvex, ovate to elliptic, glabrous, light brown. Nuts 2.2-2.4 x 1-1.2 mm, oblong, light green to silver-green.

Flowering:

December

Fruiting:

January - April

Threats:

Currently this species is confined to a single remnant stand of forest on the Surville Cliffs. This forest remnant is a survivor from past fires which all but destroyed the forest of the ultramafic zone at North Cape. *Uncinia perplexa* dislikes strong sun and so is vulnerable to the loss of the associated pohutukawa forest. The main threat to this forest is continuing browse from possums but fire is also a serious risk. Some weeds such as pampas grass (*Cortaderia selloana* (Schult. et Schult.f.) Asch. et Graebn.) and *Hakea* also pose a risk through potential competition should they become better established at North Cape.

*Attribution:

Fact Sheet prepared for NZPCN by P.J. de Lange & March 2004. Description modified from Heenan & de Lange (2001).

References and further reading:

Heenan, P.B.; de Lange, P. J. 2001: A new, dodecaploid species of *Uncinia* (Cyperaceae) from ultramafic rocks, Surville Cliffs, Northland, New Zealand. *New Zealand Journal of Botany* 39(3): 373-380

For more information, visit:

http://nzpcn.org.nz/flora_details.asp?ID=43



Caption: Under *Kunzea*, Te Paki. Nov 2010.

Photographer: Jeremy Rolfe



Caption: Male florets, Te Paki. Nov 2010.

Photographer: Jeremy Rolfe