

Introduction

What are Rushes and Sedges?

“Rushes and sedges” is a phrase used to describe grass-like plants which are not actually grasses. They are usually in moist areas and are often found with grasses. It is commonly agreed that “rushes” are members of the **Juncaceae** family and “sedges” are members of the **Cyperaceae** family. There is another family – **Restionaceae** – which also has grass-like plants, more particularly, rush-like. There is a useful table from *Native Plants of the Sydney District An Identification Guide* by Alan Fairley & Philip Moore, 1989 – see 3. Comparison Table – which compares the three families with Poaceae.

A useful aide-memoir (though not 100% correct) is “sedges have edges, rushes are round and grasses have knees that bend down to the ground” (taken from <https://www.centralcoastbiodiversity.org/grasses-sedges-and-rushes.html>). The knees referred to for grasses are the nodes. Later chapters cover the 3 families – Juncaceae, Restionaceae and Cyperaceae – in detail, providing keys and plant descriptions.

In the 2007 version, mention was made of 2 other families – **Eriocaulaceae** and **Centrolepidaceae**. This was mainly because they were covered in Van Klaphake’s booklet and are also grass-like so could be considered to be within “rushes and sedges”. Keys taken from *Flora of New South Wales* show that we are talking about monocotyledons – or Liliidae – see 4 Monocot Key. There is a page in Van Klaphake’s book (p7) which depicts other monocotyledons which are unlikely to be mistaken for “rushes and sedges”, some because they have coloured flowers. He goes on to provide a key to the 5 families, which is reproduced here – see 5 Key to 5 Families. This is still useful to use, especially as it includes diagrams. However, it should be noted that Centrolepidaceae has most recently been included in Restionaceae following the release of Angiosperm Phylogeny Group (APG) version IV which is a molecular-based system of classifying flowering plants - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/APG_IV_system). So *Centrolepis* species will be included in Restionaceae. Eriocaulaceae has a small chapter.

There are tables showing species found in the ACT – 6 Rushes and Sedges in ACT – as well as in the Southern Tablelands – 7 Rushes and Sedges in ST. There are then chapters on Eriocaulaceae, Juncaceae, Restionaceae and Cyperaceae which contain separate lists of species, keys and descriptions.

A reminder, this is as correct as possible to **October 2019**.