

# Charles Gaudichaud-Beaupré (1789 – 1854)

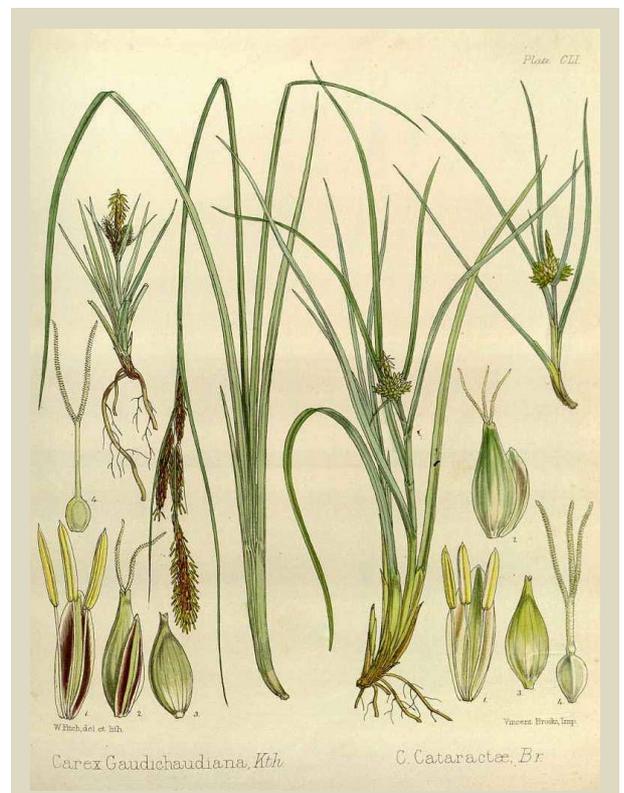
**B**orn on 4 September 1789 at Angoulême, south-western France, Charles Gaudichaud-Beaupré was the son of Jean-Jacques Gaudichaud and his wife Rose, née Mallat, from long established agricultural land-owning families. His parents died when he was very young, and Charles was raised first by his maternal grandfather and then by an uncle. A local doctor with a love of natural history triggered his scientific vocation. In 1805 he began pharmacy studies at his brother-in-law's shop in Cognac, and back in Angoulême two years later, local priests and teachers encouraged his interest in natural history. After fulfilling conscription duties he completed his studies in Paris under Pierre-Jean Robiquet, professor of chemistry at the Pharmaceutical College. He also acquired botanical knowledge from Laurent de Jussieu at the Jardin des Plantes, René Louiche Desfontaines, director of the Muséum Nationale d'Histoire Naturelle, and Louis Claude Richard, professor at the École de Médecine (and father of renowned botanist Achille Richard).

The voyages of James Cook stimulated his love of adventure. In April 1810 he was appointed dispenser in the military marine, and from 1811 to 1814 he served at Antwerp. When the Napoleonic Wars ended and the French returned to scientific exploration, Gaudichaud-Beaupré (aged 28) became pharmacist and botanist on the corvette *L'Uranie* commanded by Louis-Claude de Freycinet. Leaving Toulon on 17 September 1817, the expedition's two ships sailed to the Pacific and then south to Sydney, which was reached on 18 November 1819. On Christmas Day they left on a course south of New Zealand, and on 14 February 1820, near the end of the voyage, *L'Uranie* struck a submerged reef and was finally run ashore near the abandoned French settlement of Port Louis in the Falkland Islands. Only 1500 or so of Gaudichaud's specimens escaped submersion, but after weeks of patient work he managed to salvage a further 2500, whilst also collecting plants near the camp. Meanwhile a vessel was purchased and renamed *La Physicienne* for the expedition's return home in November 1820.

Gaudichaud-Beaupré worked on and published the botanical part of the voyage in 1826. In 1831–1832 he visited Chile, Brazil and Peru on the *Herminie*, and on his second global circumnavigation as botanist on *La Bonite* (1836–1837) he was given an early collection from Madagascar made by Auguste Pervillé. On his return he became professor of pharmacy in Paris at the École de Médecine, and attached to the Muséum Nationale d'Histoire Naturelle, he worked on his botanical collections.

He died on 15 January 1884 and was buried in Montparnasse cemetery, near a former travelling companion Jules Sébastien Dumont d'Urville.

From his voyages he brought back more than 10,000 specimens of flowering plants, ferns, algae, bryophytes and fungi, of which 1200–1400 were new species; he became an eminent specialist in botanical systematics and in acknowledgement of his contribution to science was admitted an associate member of the Academy of Sciences in 1827 and the Academy of Medicine in 1834. Several species commemorate him, including *Carex gaudichaudiana*, a sedge found in Australia, New Guinea and New Zealand, described by the German botanist Karl (Carl) Sigismund Kunth in 1837.



## **Carex gaudichaudiana**

*Carex* (Greek *keiro* 'to cut', alluding to the sharp leaf edges of some species) is a large genus of grass-like plants, mainly in temperate and colder regions, with more than 70 species in New Zealand. *Carex gaudichaudiana* (left) is a bright green, sward-forming sedge with a creeping rhizome, forming a wide-spreading plant 15–30 cm or more tall. The leaves are double-folded with dried, twisted tips; flower spikes erect and usually sessile, in groups of 3–5. It is found almost throughout New Zealand (common in Waikato, absent in Taranaki) in damp swards on lake and river edges, bogs and seeps, from sea level to 1800 m.

ILLUSTRATION: Walter Fitch  
Hooker's *Botany of the Antarctic Voyage* (1844–60)