

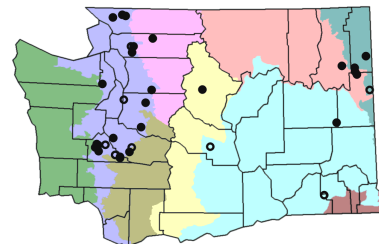
Carex comosa Boott

bristly sedge

Cyperaceae - sedge family

status: State Sensitive, BLM sensitive, USFS sensitive

rank: G5 / S2



General Description: Perennial with coarse, 3-angled stems, 5-12 dm tall, densely clustered on short, stout rhizomes. Leaves hairless; blades elongate, flat, 5-16 mm wide. Leaf below the lowest female spike with a well-developed blade, much longer than the inflorescence.

Floral Characteristics: Female spikes (2) 3-6, erect or nodding on slender peduncles, 2-7 cm long and about 1.5 cm thick. Male spike solitary, terminal, up to 6 cm long, or the terminal spike sometimes androgynous, gynaeandrous, or mixed. Female scales 2.8-12 x 0.4-1 mm, with a short, thin, membranous body, and a prominent, rough awn tip 2-6 mm long. Perigynia numerous, densely crowded, spreading or pointed downward, pale greenish, 5-8.7 mm long, with 14-22 prominent nerves, lanceolate or lance-ovate, firm-textured, only slightly inflated. Beak with 2 conspicuous, arched to divergent, slender, firm teeth 1.3-2.1 (2.8) mm long. Stigmas 3.

Fruits: Achenes 3-angled, smooth, light brown, 1.2-1.8 mm long, continuous with the persistent, bony style. Identifiable May to July.

Identification Tips: Distinguished by usually drooping lower spikes with a *bottlebrush* appearance and long, divergent perigynia teeth. *Carex hystericina* also has pendant spikes, but the perigynium teeth are smaller. *Carex utriculata* lacks long, divergent teeth on the perigynia and its spikes are more erect.

Range: Southeastern Canada to MN, southward to FL and west to TX. In the western U.S., from CA to B.C., eastward to MT.

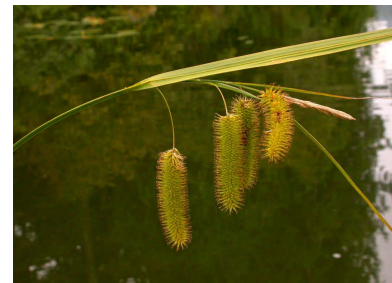
Habitat/Ecology: Marshes, lakeshores, and wet meadows. Associated species include cattail (*Typha latifolia*), rose spirea (*Spiraea douglasii*), sedges (*Carex* spp.), rushes (*Juncus* spp.), and bur-reed (*Sparganium* spp.). Elevations in WA: 9-770 m (30-2520 ft). This species grows vegetatively for the first years; it invades gaps in wetlands, dominating them for up to a decade.

Comments: Threats include changes in hydrology, invasion of habitat by reed canarygrass (*Phalaris arundinacea*), logging, and shoreline development. This species is commercially available; distinguishing cultivated from native individuals is problematic. It is rare throughout its western distribution, as well as in several midwestern states and eastern Canadian provinces.

References: Bernard & Seischab 1994.



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