

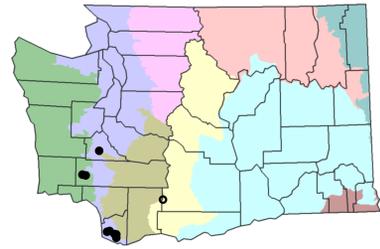
# ***Carex densa*** (L.H. Bailey) L.H. Bailey

dense sedge

Cyperaceae - sedge family

status: State Threatened, BLM sensitive, USFS sensitive

rank: G5 / S1



**General Description:** Adapted from Flora of North America (1993+):  
Densely clustered perennial from short rootstocks; stems 3-10 dm tall, erect. Leaf blades shorter than the flowering stem, flat, 50 cm x 2-5 mm; ventral leaf sheath sparsely brown or red-dotted and conspicuously cross-wrinkled; ligule notched to pointed, 0-4 mm.

**Floral Characteristics:** Inflorescence paniculate, the branches closely aggregated to form an oblong to ovate head 3-5 cm long; spikes androgynous, closely congested. Female scales brownish to translucent-margined, awn 0.5-2 mm. Perigynia ovate, 2.8-4 mm long, yellowish brown turning, medium or reddish brown, with (0) 3-7 nerves dorsally and ventrally, the base widely rounded, usually with well-developed spongy tissue. Perigynium beak 1-1.5 mm, 1/3-1/2 as long as the body of the perigynium, with 2 teeth. Stigmas 2.

**Fruits:** Achenes lenticular, 1.5-1.7 x 1.5-1.8 mm, reddish brown, ovate, glossy; style deciduous. Identifiable June to August.

**Identification Tips:** Completely mature perigynia are critical for identification. *Carex vulpinoidea* is similar but has leaves longer than the flowering stem so that the fruits are hidden down in the leaves and a long narrow bract at each spike; its perigynia are dull grayish brown in color and nerveless on both faces (or sometime 3-veined dorsally).

**Range:** Coastal mountains from San Diego Co., CA, north to OR, chiefly west of the Sierra and Cascade summits. Peripheral in WA.

**Habitat/Ecology:** In WA this species grows in wet meadows, remnant prairies, and on eroding hummocks in intertidal marshland. Associated species include tufted hairgrass (*Deschampsia cespitosa*), rushes (*Juncus effusus*, *J. ensifolius*, *J. tenuis*), sedges (*Carex unilateralis* and others), and several nonnative grasses. *C. densa* habitats are strongly influenced by fluctuating water levels, which probably reduce competition from other plants. Elevations in WA: 60-165 m (190-540 ft). There is also a high-elevation historical record from Yakima Co., but it needs verification.

**Comments:** Additional inventory along the Columbia River is needed. Threats include small population sizes, erosion, dredge-spoil dumping, and oil spills along the Columbia River.

**References:** Flora of North America 1993+, vol. 23.

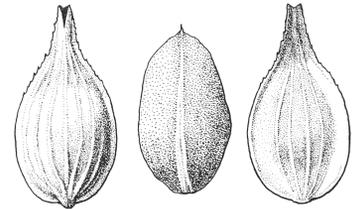


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© Bruce Newhouse, Field Guide to  
the Sedges of the Pacific Northwest  
(Oregon State University Press,  
2000)



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