

***Carex pallescens* L.**
pale sedge
Cyperaceae (Sedge Family)

Status: State Review Group 1
Rank: G5SNR

General Description: Adapted from FNA eds. (2002): *Carex pallescens* is a perennial with hollow, hairy stems that are 7¾ to 31½ in. (20-80 cm) tall. The sheaths of the leaves are also hairy, as are the lower surface of the leaves, which are 1/16 to 1/8 in. (2-3 mm) wide. The inflorescences are lateral spikes that are close together, and ¼ to ¾ in. (5-20 mm) long by ¼ in. (4.5-6 mm) wide. The spikes at the top of the plant are staminate (only bear male flowers) and are ¼ to 1¼ in. (5-30mm) long and 1/16 in. (1.1-2.5 mm) wide. The scales of the female flowers are ovate, 1/8 in. (2.2-3.2 mm) long, and 1/16 in. (1.1-1.5 mm) wide, with short, abrupt tips that are as long as the perigynium (the specialized bract that encloses the flower). The scales of the male flowers are oblong-ovate, 1/8 in. (2.7-4.2 mm) long, and end abruptly or taper to a short, sharp, pointed tip. The glabrous perigynia are ascending or somewhat spreading, weakly 14-20 veined, elliptic to oblong, 1/8 in. (2.3-3 mm) long, by 1/16 in. (1.1-1.5 mm) wide, and beakless.

Identification Tips: Within Washington *Carex pallescens* may be confused with *C. utriculata* and can be distinguished by the following. *C. pallescens* has hollow stems that are 7¾ to 31½ in. (20-80 cm) tall, the blades are hairy on the undersurface, and the beakless perigynia are 1/8 in. (2.3-3 mm) long, whereas the stems of *C. utriculata* are not hollow and are 12-48 in. (30-122 cm) tall, the leaf blades are glabrous, and the perigynium is evidently beaked and 1/8 to ¼ in. (4-7 mm) long. As with all members of the sedge family, a technical key is required for identification.

Phenology: This species was identified in Washington in June.

Range: In the east this species is known from Ontario and Quebec and south to Tennessee and Virginia. Disjunct populations in the western U.S. occur in British Columbia, Washington, and Idaho. In Washington the taxon was found in Stevens County. There are two non-native populations of *Carex pallescens* in Clark County (Zika 2005).

Habitat: In Stevens County this species was found in wet to dryish meadows with little disturbance and few to no exotics, at an elevation of 2300 feet (701 m). Associated species include beaked sedge (*Carex utriculata*), Cusick's sedge (*C. cusickii*), rushes (*Juncus* spp.), hooked-spur violet (*Viola adunca*), woolly blue violet

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Known distribution
of *Carex pallescens*
in Washington



● Current (1980+)
○ Historic (older than 1980)

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(*V. sororia*), Manna-grass (*Glyceria* sp.), bentgrass (*Agrostis* sp.), American bugleweed (*Lycopus americanus*), black-girdle bulrush (*Scirpus atrocinctus*), and Idaho blue-eyed grass (*Sisyrinchium idahoense*).

Ecology: Many of the native taxa growing with the Idaho and Washington *Carex pallescens* populations are disjunct from the east.

State Status Comments: At this time, it appears that that the eastern Washington population of this species is native, but western Washington populations are introduced. More information is needed on this species before status can be assigned.

Inventory Needs: Further fieldwork is needed to determine whether this species is definitely native in eastern Washington.

Threats and Management Concerns: The one known population is eastern Washington is affected by trampling and grazing.

Comments: *Carex pallescens* cannot be found in Hitchcock et al. (1969). *C. pallescens* L. var. *neogaea* Fern. is a synonym for *C. pallescens* L.

References:

Bjork, C. 2002. Recommended status of *Carex pallescens* L. var. *neogaea*. Unpublished. On file with WNHP.

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