



*Carex aquatilis*. (A) Pistillate scales, (B) perigynia, (C) achenes, (D) inflorescence. A through C: Left and center—dorsal views; right—ventral view.

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*Carex aquatilis* Wahl.

Water sedge

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**HABIT:** Culms arising singly or few together from stout, scaly rhizomes.

**Culms:** Erect, slender, obtusely to sharply angled, reddish tinged at the base, 1-15 dm tall, exceeding the leaves, **phyllopodic**, dried leaves of the previous year present.

**LEAVES:** 8-15, erect. **Blades:** Long-tapering, flat, light green to glaucous-green. **Sheaths:** Dorsally slightly hispidulous or smooth; ventrally thin and membranous-white when young, becoming reddish- or brownish-dotted distally when mature; concave at the mouth.

**BRACTS:** Lowest leaflike, sheathless, 7-25 cm long, greater than half the length of the inflorescence or more often equaling or exceeding it; upper reduced.

**SPIKES:** 3-7, oblong or linear-cylindrical. **Terminal:** 1-3, **staminate**, linear, 1.25 cm long, 2-3 mm wide. **Lateral: Pistillate** or the upper ones often androgynous, erect, sessile, closely flowered, 1-4 cm long, 2.5-4 mm wide; lowest spikes often long-peduncled, arising from near the inflorescence base.

**PISTILLATE SCALES:** Ovate to oblong-ovate with obtuse to acuminate tip, shorter or longer than the perigynia and normally much narrower; reddish brown to purplish black with paler midrib, often white-hyaline-tipped.

**PERIGYNIA:** Oval to obovate, unequally biconvex, somewhat flattened, commonly speckled or suffused with reddish brown on a pale background, sessile or short-stipitate, 2-3.6 mm long, 1.2-2.2 mm wide. **Nerves:** Marginal only. **Beaks:** Entire, 0.1-0.3 mm long.

**ACHENES:** Broadly obovate, abruptly short-apiculate, lenticular, substipitate, yellowish to brownish black, 1-1.8 mm long, 0.7-1.6 mm wide. **Stigmas:** 2.

**HABITAT AND DISTRIBUTION:** Common. Wet meadows, swamps, ponds, lakeshores, and streambanks from **foothills to near timberline**. Circumboreal at high latitudes. In North America extending south through the Cascade Mountains to California and east to Nebraska. In appropriate habitats throughout the Intermountain area. **June-August.**

**SIMILAR SPECIES:** See appendix, table 3.