



Carex aurea. (A) Inflorescences, (B) pistillate scales, (C) perigynia, (D) achenes. B through D: Left—dorsal view; right—ventral view.

Carex aurea Nutt.
Golden sedge, golden-fruited sedge

SYNONYMS: *C. garberi* Bailey; *C. hassei* Bailey.

HABIT: Loosely caespitose from long, slender rhizomes. **Culms:** Slender, erect, 0.3-5.5 dm tall, often shorter than the leaves, especially in smaller plants, **phyllopodic** or somewhat aphyllpodic.

LEAVES: 4-7, clustered near the base. **Blades:** Flat but channeled, attenuate at the apex, 1-4(5) mm wide. **Sheaths:** Thin and hyaline ventrally, truncate to shallowly concave at the mouth.

BRACTS: Leaflike, sheathing, well-developed, usually exceeding the inflorescence.

SPIKES: 4-6, linear-oblong, short-peduncled or sessile. **Terminal: Staminate,** sometimes gynaeandrous, rarely androgynous, linear, 3-10 mm long. **Lateral: Pistillate,** 4-20 flowered, widely separate below and sometimes nearly basal, more or less approximate above; perigynia ascending-spreading.

PISTILLATE SCALES: Ovate to orbicular, short cuspidate to obtuse-tipped, shorter and narrower than the perigynia and usually deciduous before them, 3-nerved, reddish brown with a wide pale or greenish center and narrow, white-hyaline margins.

PERIGYNIA: Orbicular-obovoid, sometimes broadly substipitate at the base, more or less rounded distally, whitish-papillate-glaucous on a light green background when young, often becoming fleshy, translucent and golden yellow or yellow orange to brownish at maturity, 1.7-3.0 mm long, 1.5-2 mm wide. **Nerves:** Obscurely to prominently coarse-ribbed on both faces. **Beaks:** None, the orifice entire.

ACHENES: Lenticular, stipitate, brownish, 1.3-2.0 mm long, 1-1.6 mm wide. **Stigmas:** 2.

HABITAT AND DISTRIBUTION: Rather common in moist or wet places, meadows, bogs, and along streambanks. **Lowlands to near timberline.** Alaska to Newfoundland, south to California, Idaho, southern Nevada, Utah, northern New Mexico, Nebraska, northern Indiana, and Pennsylvania. **April-August.**

SIMILAR SPECIES: *C. garberi* and *C. hassei* are sometimes distinguished from *C. aurea*. *C. garberi*—pistillate scales and perigynia crowded; scales red brown to purplish, often covering the perigynia; bract sheath mouth V-shaped; spikes densely clustered. *C. hassei*—pistillate scales and perigynia usually not crowded; scales whitish to reddish brown, shorter than the perigynia, appressed, and persisting for a time after the perigynia fall; bract sheath mouth U-shaped; spikes not densely clustered.