



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

***Carex disperma* Dewey**
Soft-leaved sedge

HABIT: Loosely tufted from long, slender rhizomes. **Culms:** Very slender and weak, usually nodding, 1-6 dm tall, exceeding the leaves, somewhat **aphyllopodic**.

LEAVES: Borne on the lower part of the culm. **Blades:** Flat, thin, soft, light green, 0.75-2 mm wide. **Sheaths:** Tight, very thin and hyaline ventrally, truncate at the mouth.

BRACTS: Filiform-foliaceous to 2 cm long or short and scarious; margins hyaline; midrib firm, often prolonged as an awn.

SPIKES: **Androgynous**, but sometimes appearing gynaeandrous due to growth of the perigynia, sessile, green, becoming dark brown, to 5 mm long; 2-6 flowered with 1-3 perigynia; the inflorescence interrupted-linear with the lower spikes separate and the upper somewhat contiguous; perigynia spreading-ascending.

PISTILLATE SCALES: Ovate-triangular and acute to awned at the tip, shorter than to equaling the perigynia, largely scarious or hyaline-scarious, stramineous or pale.

PERIGYNIA: Elliptic-ovoid, unequally biconvex, leathery, plump with spongy tissue filling the wall from the base to near the beak, short-stipitate, light green to yellowish green, becoming golden brown to dark brown, 2-3 mm long, 1-1.6 mm wide. **Nerves:** Numerous on both surfaces and reaching to the beak; marginal nerves not obvious. **Beaks:** Abruptly contracted, very short or obsolete, entire or obliquely cleft, minutely bidentate.

ACHENES: Oblong-elliptic, lenticular, glossy, golden brown, 1-2 mm long, 0.9-1.3 mm wide; style short, semi-persistent as a slender apiculus. **Stigmas:** 2.

HABITAT AND DISTRIBUTION: Common in swamps, bogs, wet meadows, and moist shady woods in the mountains and on peaty banks of streams and lakes at **moderate to high elevations**. In North America from Alaska to Laborador and south to California, central Idaho, Nevada, Utah, Wyoming, Arizona, and New Jersey. **June-August**.

SIMILAR SPECIES: *C. disperma*—Culms slender and flexible; inflorescence with an interrupted-linear outline; perigynium many-nerved; achene lenticular; occurs in moist or wet places and shady woods. *C. vallicola*—Culms stiff and erect; inflorescence with a ragged outline due to the few-flowered spikes; perigynium with 2 ventro-marginal nerves; beak a little longer; achene orbicular; occurs in sagebrush-grass areas.