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

Carex pachystachya Cham.
Chamisso sedge, thick-headed sedge

HABIT: Small, dense clumps from short, black rhizomes. **Culms:** Slender, conspicuously striate, 1.5-10 dm tall, exceeding the leaves, **aphyllopodic**.

LEAVES: 3-5, borne on the lower one-third of the culm. **Blades:** Flat, (1.5)2-5(6.5) mm wide. **Sheaths:** Tight, white-hyaline ventrally, truncate or concave at the mouth.

BRACTS: Small and inconspicuous, setaceous.

SPIKES: 4-12, **gynaecandrous**, sessile, greenish black, becoming golden brown or dark brown, 7-12 mm long, closely aggregated into a dense sub-orbicular or oblong head 1-2.5(3) cm long and 7-15 mm thick (but occasionally all or the lower spikes separate); perigynia ascending-spreading to spreading at maturity.

PISTILLATE SCALES: Ovate with an acute tip, often shorter and somewhat narrower than the perigynia, chestnut brown to reddish brown or blackish throughout.

PERIGYNIA: Narrowly to broadly ovate, plano-convex, base and margins often filled with spongy tissue, abruptly tapering at the apex, wing-margined and narrowly serrulate, tan with pale green or greenish-stramineous margins, copper-colored or golden brown at maturity, 2.8-5 mm long, 1.1-2.3 mm wide. **Nerves:** Several, fine dorsally; generally few, obscure, or lacking ventrally; usually with prominent inframarginal nerves delimiting the wing. **Beaks:** Slender, less than half the length of the body; the tip short or long, terete, smooth, dark brown, entire to shallowly bidentate.

ACHENES: Short-oblong, ovate, lenticular, flat ventrally, convex dorsally, green, becoming brown at maturity, 1.2-1.9 mm long, 0.8-1.5 mm wide. **Stigmas:** 2.

HABITAT AND DISTRIBUTION: Locally common in wet to moist meadows, open woods, and on rather dry slopes **from sea level to timberline**. From coastal Alaska south to California and east through Alberta, Idaho, and western Montana. Occasional in northern Wyoming. **June-August**.

SIMILAR SPECIES: See appendix, table 1.