



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

Carex praegracilis W. Boott
Blackcreeper sedge, clustered field sedge,
field clustered sedge, silver sedge

HABIT: Culms arising singly or few together from stout, elongate, black or brownish black creeping rhizomes, sometimes forming dense colonies.

Culms: Smooth, sharply triangular, 2-7.5 dm tall, exceeding the leaves, somewhat **aphyllopodic**.

LEAVES: Several, all borne near the base. **Blades:** Flattened or somewhat channeled, firm, 1-3 mm wide. **Sheaths:** Hyaline-membranous ventrally, slightly and narrowly truncate or concave at the mouth.

BRACTS: Inconspicuous, setaceous, scarious, shorter than the inflorescence.

SPIKES: 5-15, **androgynous** (plants sometimes dioecious), sessile, stramineous or brown, aggregated into a thick-cylindric or oblong-ovoid head 1-5 cm long and 5-10(15) mm wide; the lower spikes sometimes separate; perigynia appressed-ascending.

PISTILLATE SCALES: Ovate with an acuminate or cuspidate tip, wider and longer to equaling the perigynia and completely concealing them, stramineous to brown with conspicuously hyaline margins and a pale midrib.

PERIGYNIA: Ovate to ovate-lanceolate, plano-convex to concavo-convex, tending to be spongy based, sharp-edged and serrulate distally, short-stipitate, light to dark brown with pale green margins when fresh, (2.8)3-4 mm long, 1.3-1.6 mm wide. **Nerves:** Several, faint dorsally, absent ventrally. **Beaks:** Prominent and tapering, obliquely cleft and sometimes bidentate, 0.6-1.3 mm long; the orifice with overlapping hyaline edges.

ACHENES: Obovoid, lenticular, light to dark brown, 1.2-1.9 mm long, 1-1.4 mm wide. **Stigmas:** 2.

HABITAT AND DISTRIBUTION: A variable and very widely distributed species of open, moist or wet, often alkaline places, but not confined to alkaline sites. **Plains and lowlands to moderate elevations** in the mountains. Yukon and British Columbia, south to California and Mexico and east to Manitoba, Iowa, and Kansas. Common in the interior of North America. **May-August**.

SIMILAR SPECIES: See *C. douglasii*.