



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

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*Carex prionophylla* Holm  
Firethread sedge, saw-leaved sedge

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**HABIT:** Densely clumped to sometimes solitary from short, stout rhizomes. **Culms:** Erect or decumbent, sharply triangular, strongly serrulate at the angles, 4-15 dm tall, exceeding the leaves, **aphyllopodic**.

**LEAVES:** 3-5, clustered well above the base of the culm. **Blades:** Flat with slightly revolute margins, thick, scabrous, 3-6 dm long, 2-5 mm wide. **Sheaths:** Strongly hispidulous dorsally, tinged with yellowish brown; red-dotted and fragile ventrally; basal sheaths cross-fibrillose, purplish, up to 15 cm long.

**BRACTS:** Leaflike or setaceous, sheathless, dark-auricled, 1-6 cm long, shorter than the inflorescence.

**SPIKES:** 3-5, erect and rather crowded, oblong or linear-cylindrical, greenish black to bluish purple. **Terminal: Staminate**, sometimes with a few basal perigynia, short-peduncled, 1.8-2.5 cm long, 3-4.5 mm wide. **Lateral: Pistillate**, or androgynous, sessile or the lowest ones slightly peduncled, 1-3(5) cm long, 3-4 mm wide, approximate or the lowest somewhat separate, closely 15-40 flowered; perigynia appressed.

**PISTILLATE SCALES:** Oblong-ovate, mostly acute at the tip, half as wide as and usually shorter than the perigynia, scarios, reddish brown to purplish black, sometimes with a lighter midvein.

**PERIGYNIA:** Generally elliptic to obovate or oblong-ovate, compressed, slightly inflated distally, loosely enclosing the achene, more or less acute or tapered at the minutely beaked apex, membranous and granular, pale greenish to coppery tan or partly suffused with purple, 2.3-3.4 mm long, 1.2-1.7 mm wide. **Nerves:** Lacking except for two marginal ribs. **Beaks:** Reddish black, entire, 0.2-0.3 mm long.

**ACHENES:** Ovate to obovate, lenticular, subsessile, 1.2-1.7 mm long, 1-1.2 mm wide. **Stigmas:** 2.

**HABITAT AND DISTRIBUTION:** Moist or wet meadows, lakeshores, mountain streams, and alpine tundra from **middle to higher elevations**. Northeastern Washington, northeastern Oregon, northern and central Idaho, and northwestern Montana. **June-August**.

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