

Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

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Maine Natural Areas Program

Carex laxiculmis Schwein.

Spreading Sedge

State Rank: S2

Global Rank: G5

State Status: Endangered

Habitat: Rich woods and glades, streambanks. [Hardwood to mixed forest (forest, upland)]

Range: Southern Maine to southern Ontario, west to Wisconsin, and south to North Carolina and Tennessee.

Aids to Identification: Members of this genus can be difficult to identify without careful examination of microscopic features and knowledge of general groups of species. *C. laxiculmis*, in the section *Laxiflorae*, is characterized by slender culms with relatively few-flowered, long-peduncled pistillate spikes and one terminal staminate spike raised well above the pistillate ones. Achenes are sharply three-angled. The basal rosettes of leaves are glaucous or pale green. *C. laxiculmis* is closely related to several species which also occur in Maine, and more commonly: *C. digitalis*, *C. platyphylla*, and *C. plantaginea*, and it hybridizes with *C. digitalis*. *Carex laxiculmis* has leaves up to 12 mm wide and the lowest 1-3 scales of carpellate spikes empty or subtending staminate flowers.

Ecological characteristics: Little currently known about this species in Maine. The two occurrences are in hardwood forests with a red oak component.

Phenology: Flowers May to early July.

Family: Cyperaceae

Synonyms: Represented in Maine and New England by var. *laxiculmis*

Known Distribution in Maine: This rare plant has been documented from a total of 6 town(s) in the following county(ies): Sagadahoc, Somerset, York.

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Reason(s) for rarity: At northern limit of range.

Conservation considerations: Known populations are small and subject to the vagaries of small populations such as random fluctuations or localized disturbance events.

Credits

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