



Maine Department of Conservation  
Natural Areas Program

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*Carex prairea* Dewey ex Wood

**Prairie Sedge**

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**Habitat:** Circumneutral fens, meadows, and wet thickets. [Open wetland, not coastal nor rivershore (non-forested, wetland)]

**Range:** Quebec to Alberta, south to New Jersey, and west to Nebraska.

**Phenology:** Fruits late May - July.

**Family:** Cyperaceae

**Aids to Identification:** Identification of species of the genus *Carex* is usually difficult and dependent upon rather technical characters. *C. prairea* is in the section *Paniculateae* and it is distinguished by the combination of the following characteristics: leaves are 1-3 mm wide; perigynia are ovate, tapering to a beak, and covered with scales; the vein-less band of the leaf sheath is yellow-brown. The lower nodes of the inflorescence bear 2 or more spikes and the sheaths lack red dots that are present in *C. diandra*.

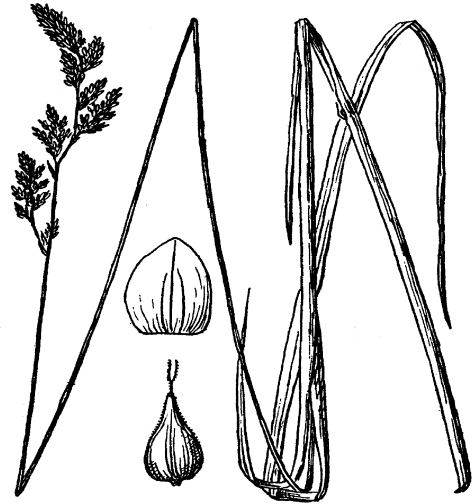


Illustration from Britton & Brown's Illustrated Flora of the Northern United States and Canada, 2nd ed.

**Ecological characteristics:** In Maine this sedge is known to occur in circumneutral fen communities.

**Synonyms:** Formerly referred to as *Carex diandra* var. *ramosa* (Boott) Fern.

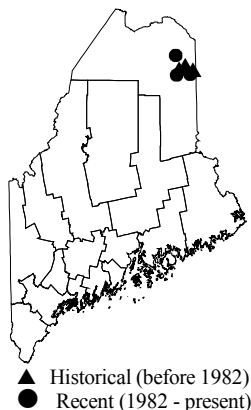
**Rarity of *Carex prairea***

<b>State Rank:</b>	S1	Critically imperiled in Maine because of extreme rarity or vulnerability to extirpation.
<b>New England Rank:</b>	Division 3:ME	Locally rare plant: Not rare throughout New England, but Maine occurrences are disjunct or ecologically anomalous from the rest of its New England range.
<b>Global Rank:</b>	G5?	Demonstrably widespread, abundant, and secure globally (uncertain).

**Status of *Carex prairea***

<b>Federal Status:</b>	None	No Federal Status.
<b>State Status:</b>	Threatened	Rare and, with further decline, could become endangered; or federally listed as Threatened. Listing criteria met: Special habitat

### Known Distribution in Maine:



This rare plant has been documented from a total of 6 town(s) in the following county(ies): Aroostook.

**Dates of documented observations are:** 1902, 1940, 1945, 1985, 1986, 1989

### Reason(s) for rarity:

Scarcity of suitable habitat.

### Conservation considerations:

Because this sedge is typically found in the more open areas of cedar fens, it is likely that partial or patchy removal of the canopy would maintain suitable habitat for this species. Full removal of the canopy would be likely to lead to more drastic habitat changes that could adversely affect the plant.

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Plant rarity and status is based on 2008 data and the rest of the information in this fact sheet was downloaded from the Natural Areas Program's Biological and Conservation Database on 11 MAY 2004. We are grateful to our Botanical Advisory Group for additional information on particular species, and in particular, to Arthur Haines for his assistance with identifying characteristics and taxonomic questions. Nomenclature follows Haines and Vining's *Flora of Maine* (V.F. Thomas Press, 1998); where older works refer to a plant by another name, it is given under "Synonyms". The Natural Areas Program, within the Department of Conservation, maintains the most comprehensive source of information on Maine's rare or endangered plants and rare or exemplary natural communities, and is a member of the Association for Biodiversity Information.

If you know of locations for this plant or would like more information on this species,  
please contact the Natural Areas Program  
State House Station 93, Augusta, Maine 04333; telephone (207) 287-8044.

