



Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program

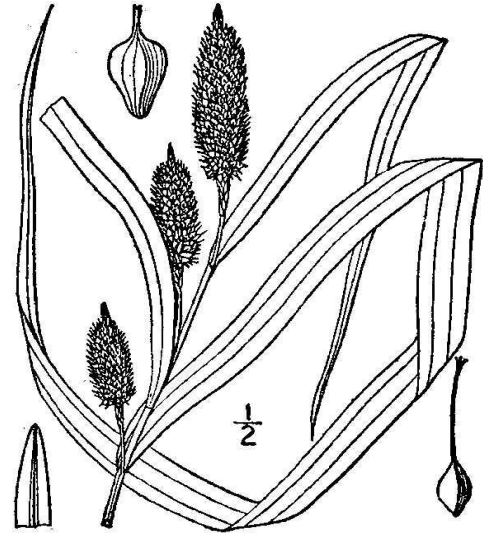
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Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife

Cat-tail Sedge *Carex typhina* Michx.

State Status: **Threatened**
Federal Status: **None**

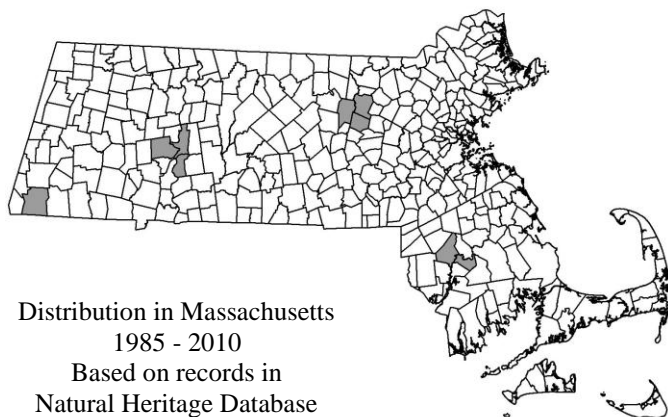
GENERAL DESCRIPTION: Cat-tail Sedge is a grass-like perennial in the Sedge family (Cyperaceae) that grows from 3 to 8 dm (1 to 2.75 ft.) in height, in dense clumps. Its leaves are 5-10 mm (0.2 - 0.4 in.) wide, with upper leaves generally overtopping the stem. Like most members of the Sedge family, Cat-tail Sedge has no showy flower parts. The much-reduced flowers are arranged in 1-6 cylindrical spikes. The upper-most spikes are 2-4 cm (0.75 - 1.5 in.) in length, consist mostly of pistillate (female) flowers and are subtended by a narrow bract (modified leaf located near a flower or inflorescence). The lateral spikes are somewhat smaller and entirely pistillate. Cat-tail Sedge's thin-walled perigynia (sac-like structures that surround the pistils and fruits) are 3.5-5 mm (0.14 - 0.2 in.) long and obconic-obovoid in shape (roughly like an egg with its narrow end down). Each perigynium is topped with a two-toothed "beak" or elongation of the pistil. Obtuse to acute pistillate scales subtend each perigynium, but are generally hidden by the dense perigynia. The slender, uppermost portion of the pistil is straight or nearly straight. Cat-tail Sedge's perigynia mature from early July through early September.



USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database / Britton, N.L., and A. Brown. 1913. *An illustrated flora of the northern United States, Canada and the British Possessions*. 3 vols. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York. Vol. 1: 439.

SIMILAR SPECIES: Sedges, members of the genus *Carex*, are difficult to identify to species by all but the most expert since it is necessary to use technical characteristics to distinguish among the species. Keys to the genus should be used to identify the species.

HABITAT: Habitats of Cat-tail Sedge are floodplain forests and their immediate vicinity--all of which experience annual, spring flooding. Among the species associated with Cat-tail Sedge in Massachusetts are Silver Maple (*Acer saccharinum*), Swamp White Oak (*Quercus bicolor*), Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*), American Elm (*Ulmus americana*), Sensitive Fern (*Onoclea sensibilis*), False Nettle (*Boehmeria cylindrica*), and Bladder Sedge (*Carex intumescens*). Rare Massachusetts plants that have been found with Cat-tail Sedge include Winged Monkey-flower (*Mimulus alatus*) and Gray's Sedge (*Carex grayi*).



Distribution in Massachusetts
1985 - 2010
Based on records in
Natural Heritage Database

A Species of Greatest Conservation Need in the Massachusetts State Wildlife Action Plan

Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife

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Please allow the Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program to continue to conserve the biodiversity of Massachusetts with a contribution for 'endangered wildlife conservation' on your state income tax form, as these donations comprise a significant portion of our operating budget.

www.mass.gov/nhesp

RANGE: The range of Cat-tail Sedge extends from southern Quebec to southern Wisconsin, south to Georgia, Louisiana and Texas. It is disjunct in Minnesota.

POPULATION STATUS IN MASSACHUSETTS:

Cat-tail Sedge is listed as "Threatened" under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act. There are eight current stations (1985-2010) and three historical stations (unverified since 1978). Reasons for the plant's rarity in Massachusetts are that Cat-tail Sedge is near the northeastern edge of its range here and that a great deal of its habitat has been cleared for agriculture. In the northeast, Cat-tail Sedge is also considered rare in Vermont, Maine, Connecticut, New Jersey, and New York. NatureServe lists it as Secure globally (G5).

THREATS AND MANAGEMENT

RECOMMENDATIONS: Competition from non-native invasive species can be a threat to Cat-tail Sedge, especially in disturbed habitats. Monitoring and removal of competing vegetation should be considered as a management strategy where appropriate. All active management of rare plant populations (including invasive species removal) is subject to review under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act, and should be planned in close consultation with the Massachusetts Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program.

Threats include changes in water quality and quantity and other degradation of habitat. All listed species are protected from killing, collecting, possessing, or sale and from activities that would destroy habitat and thus directly or indirectly cause mortality or disrupt critical behaviors.

REFERENCES:

- NatureServe. 2010. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 7.1. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available <http://www.natureserve.org/explorer>. (Accessed: December 6, 2010).
- USDA, NRCS. 2010. The PLANTS Database (<http://plants.usda.gov>, 6 December 2010). National Plant Data Center, Baton Rouge, LA 70874-4490 USA. <http://plants.usda.gov/java/profile?symbol=CATY>.

Updated 2015

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