



Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program

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Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife

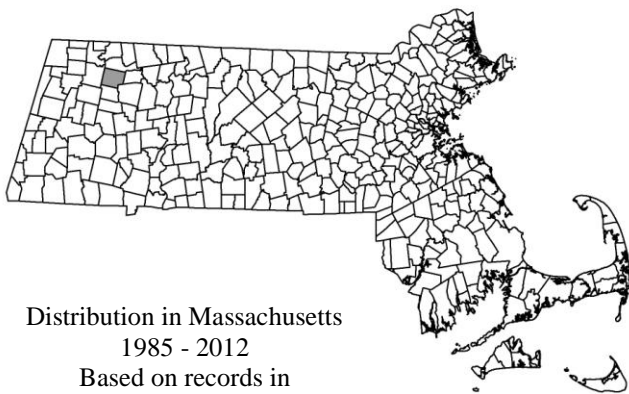
Few-flowered Sedge *Carex pauciflora* Lightf.

State Status: **Endangered**

Federal Status: **None**

GENERAL DESCRIPTION: Few-flowered Sedge is a perennial member of the Sedge family (Cyperaceae) found in sphagnum bogs. It has narrow leaves (1–2 mm) and single or loosely clustered flowering stems that are 10 to 40 cm (4–16 in.) tall. Both the common and scientific names of this species refer to its sparse inflorescence.

AIDS TO IDENTIFICATION: To identify Few-flowered Sedge and other members of the genus *Carex*, a technical manual should be consulted. Species in this genus have tiny, wind-pollinated flowers that are borne in spikes. Few-flowered Sedge is one of relatively few *Carex* species with just one spike at the top of each stem. The spike consists of a staminate portion above one to six slender, gradually tapering perigynia. The perigynia are 6 to 8 mm long and 1 to 1.5 mm wide, and are typically spreading or bent downward (deflexed).



Distribution in Massachusetts
1985 - 2012
Based on records in
Natural Heritage Database



Few-flowered Sedge has one to six slender, tapering perigynia that are spreading (left) or deflexed (right). Photos by Jennifer Garrett

SIMILAR SPECIES: Few-flowered Sedge is among the most easily recognized sedges. The perigynia of other species with single spikes in our area are not slender and tapering, are generally more numerous, and point upward rather than outward or downward. Perhaps the most similar species is Collins' Sedge (*C. collinsii*), which also has slender, spreading or reflexed, and fairly sparse perigynia. However, Collins' Sedge is a more robust plant, with wider leaves (2 to 4 mm) and longer perigynia (8 to 12 mm) that are borne in two to four separate, stalked spikes. Collins' Sedge is not known from Massachusetts and is rare in Connecticut and New York.

HABITAT: Few-flowered Sedge occurs in acidic sphagnum bogs, along with characteristic bog plants such as Leatherleaf (*Chamaedaphne calyculata*), Bog Laurel (*Kalmia polifolia*), Labrador Tea (*Rhododendron groenlandicum*), and Large Cranberry (*Vaccinium macrocarpon*). In New England, populations of Few-flowered Sedge typically occur on open bog mats where woody vegetation is short and sparse.

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.

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RANGE: Few-flowered Sedge occurs from Alaska and Washington east to Newfoundland and West Virginia. It also occurs in Eurasia. This species is listed as Endangered in Massachusetts and Pennsylvania, Special Concern in Connecticut, and Sensitive in Washington.

POPULATION STATUS IN MASSACHUSETTS:

Few-flowered Sedge is listed under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act as Endangered. 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. Few-flowered Sedge is currently known from Franklin County, and it also occurred historically in Berkshire County.

THREATS AND MANAGEMENT

RECOMMENDATIONS: As for many rare species, the exact management needs of Few-flowered Sedge are not known. Human or beaver activities that alter hydrological conditions may threaten existing populations. Populations may also be threatened by increased shading or competition from woody species. 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.

MATURE PERIGYNIA PRESENT:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec

REFERENCES:

Gleason, H.A., and A. Cronquist. 1991. *Manual of Vascular Plants of Northeastern United States and Adjacent Canada*, 2nd edition. The New York Botanical Garden, Bronx, NY.

Haines, A. 2011. *Flora Novae Angliae – a Manual for the Identification of Native and Naturalized Higher Vascular Plants of New England*. New England Wildflower Society, Yale Univ. Press, New Haven, CT.

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