



Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program

www.mass.gov/nhesp

Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife

Tall Nut-sedge *Scleria triglomerata* Michaux

State Status: **Endangered**
Federal Status: **None**

DESCRIPTION: Tall Nut-sedge is a perennial member of the Sedge family (Cyperaceae) that typically grows in full sun on disturbed, moist or wet, sandy sites. This species grows to 1 m tall, has thick knotty rhizomes, and leaves less than 1 cm wide. While Tall Nut-sedge is the most common *Scleria* species in North America, it has declined in New England in recent decades. It can be identified by its smooth, white achenes (dry, single-seeded fruits) in late summer.

AIDS TO IDENTIFICATION: A technical manual should be used to identify Tall Nut-sedge and other *Scleria* species. Tall Nut-sedge has tufted culms that are glabrous, 0.4 to 1 meter tall, and sharply triangular, growing from hard knotty (nodulose) rhizomes. The culms often arch over the distinctive bright yellow-green leaves. Leaves are 3 to 9 mm wide, rigid, and often pubescent, arising near the base of the plant. The lower part of the sheath is purplish, and the blades are linear and finely pleated, with very fine fringe hairs on the margins. The achene is relatively large (3 mm), with a smooth, white, enamel-like surface, and an unlobed hypogynium that lacks tubercles and has dense, minute papillae.

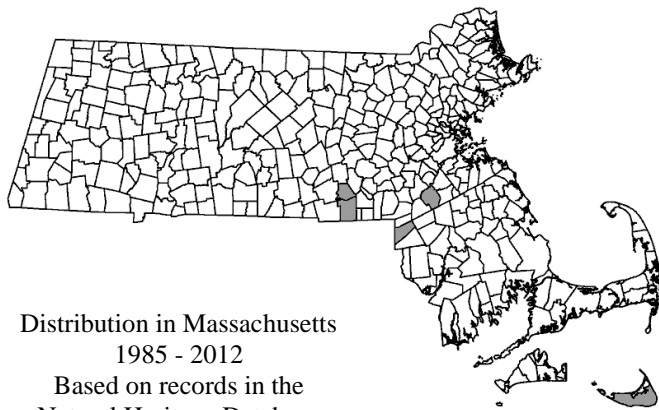


Tall Nut-sedge has glabrous, triangular culms that often arch over the bright yellow-green leaves. The achenes are relatively large (3 mm), with smooth, white surfaces. Photo by Dwight K. Lauer @ USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database / James H. Miller and Karl V. Miller. 2005. *Forest plants of the southeast and their wildlife uses*. University of Georgia Press, Athens.

SIMILAR SPECIES: Other *Scleria* species in Massachusetts have narrower leaves (1–3.5 mm), and a hypogynium that lacks minute papillae and is either lobed or has tubercles. *S. minor* is a similar species that occurs from New York south, but is not known from Massachusetts.

POPULATION STATUS IN MASSACHUSETTS:

Tall Nut-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. Tall Nut-sedge is currently known from Worcester, Norfolk, Bristol, and Nantucket Counties, with historical records from Franklin, Hampshire, Hampden, and Middlesex Counties. Tall Nut-sedge has not been seen in recent decades at more than two dozen sites where it formerly occurred in Massachusetts and Connecticut.



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

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

Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife

1 Rabbit Hill Rd., Westborough, MA; tel: 508-389-6300; fax: 508-389-7890; www.mass.gov/dfw

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RANGE: Tall Nut-sedge is the most common and widespread species of the genus *Scleria* in North America. It occurs along the Atlantic coastal plain north to Massachusetts and New York, west to Texas, south to Florida, and in Puerto Rico.

HABITAT: Tall Nut-sedge is typically found in openings in woodlands, moist, sandy fields, and low, seasonally wet, sandy areas. It prefers full sun and disturbed habitats, generally in acidic, moist soils. Associated species, in most cases, are representative of successional oak-pine forests and acidic shrubby wetlands or red maple swamps, including Red Maple (*Acer rubrum*), Early Goldenrod (*Solidago juncea*), Pennsylvania Sedge (*Carex pensylvanica*), Wintergreen (*Gautheria procumbens*), Yellow Star-grass (*Hypoxis hirsuta*), Black Huckleberry (*Gaylussacia baccata*), blueberries (*Vaccinium* spp.), Bayberry (*Morella pensylvanica*), and Little Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*).

THREATS AND MANAGEMENT

RECOMMENDATIONS: Tall Nut-sedge is an early successional species that requires some form of disturbance to create and maintain appropriate habitat. Cutting, mowing, or prescribed fire may help to maintain extant populations. Soil scarification may also be needed for Tall Nut-sedge to successfully establish. Known habitat locations should be protected from dramatic changes in light or moisture conditions. 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.

Fruiting in Massachusetts

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

REFERENCES:

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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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Updated 2015

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

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