

-State Species Abstract-
-Wyoming Natural Diversity Database-

CAREX OCCIDENTALIS
WESTERN SEDGE
Family: Cyperaceae

Status:

US Fish & Wildlife Service: None.

Agency Status: None.

Heritage Rank:

Global: G4 State: S1

WYNDD Plant List: Peripheral

(Low conservation priority)

Description: Western sedge is a densely tufted graminoid with short rhizomes and rounded to sharply triangular culms 15-80 cm tall. Leaves are flat, 1-2.5 mm wide, borne on the lower portions of the stem, and do not exceed the flowering heads. The inflorescence consists of 4-10 few-flowered, loosely clustered spikes forming a linear-oblong head 1.5-3.5 cm long. Individual spikes are straw-colored to reddish brown and have staminate flowers located above the pistillate flowers. Pistillate scales are ovate-triangular and sharp-pointed, with membranous, translucent margins. The perigynia are elliptic, 3-4.1 mm long, and greenish to coppery brown with a narrow green, minutely serrated margin and abruptly taper to a deeply bi-toothed beak 0.2-1.2 mm long. Achenes are 2-sided, light brown, and 1.3-2.4 mm long. Pistillate flowers have 2 stigmas (Dorn 1992; Hurd et al. 1998; Cronquist et al. 1977; Hermann 1970).

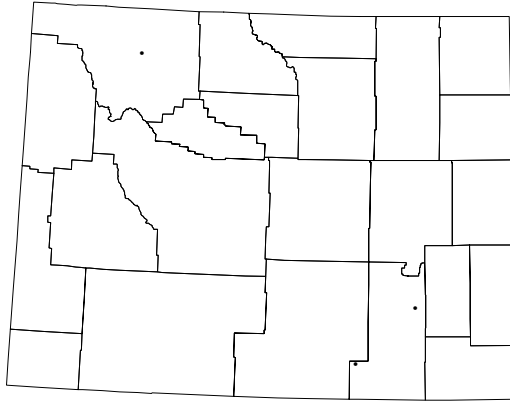
Similar Species: *Carex hoodii* has oval flowering heads and ovate, glossy brown perigynia with greenish margins. *C. vallicola* has a minutely bi-toothed perigynium beak that is more deeply cleft on the dorsal side than the ventral side (Dorn 1992). Other



Above: *Carex occidentalis* from Hermann (1970).

nonrhizomatous sedges with 2 stigmas in Wyoming have perigynia with gradually tapering beaks, pistillate flowers above the staminate flowers, or occur in moist to wet sites.

Flowering/Fruiting Period: July-August.



Above: Wyoming distribution of *Carex occidentalis*.

Distribution: Southern Rocky Mountains from southeastern Wyoming to New Mexico, west to Utah, Nevada, Arizona, and southern California, with disjunct populations in northwest Wyoming and southwest Montana. In Wyoming, western sedge is known from the Absaroka, Laramie, and Medicine Bow ranges in Albany and Park counties. A report from Sweetwater County is based on a misidentified, immature specimen.

Habitat: Dry areas in mid-elevation mountains. Cronquist et al. (1977) reported it from open or lightly wooded slopes and less often in meadows at middle to upper elevations. In Wyoming, Western sedge is found on sagebrush slopes and aspen groves at 6500-10000 feet.

Occurrences in Wyoming: Known from 2 extant and 1 historical record in Wyoming (most recently observed in 1997).

Abundance: Not known.

Trends: Not known.

Protection status: All known populations are on public lands managed for multiple use. An occurrence on Medicine Bow National Forest

is within the potential Ground Moraine Research Natural Area.

Threats: Not known. May be potentially impacted by recreation and grazing.

Managed Areas: Occurs on lands managed Medicine Bow and Shoshone National Forest and the BLM Cody Field Office. A vague record may also occur on lands managed by the BLM Rawlins Field Office.

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