

Brown Sedge

Carex buxbaumii

Description

Brown sedge is a grass-like plant that grows from long creeping rhizomes. The stems are 20 to 40 inches (0.5 to 1 meter) tall and are red-tinged at the base. The leaves are linear and elongate and about 3/16 inch (1.5 to 4) mm wide. The individual flowers are tiny, either male or female, and are clustered in cylindrical spikes near the top of flowering stems. Female flowers are enclosed by pale green sac-like structures, called perigynia, each of which is subtended by a strongly contrasting brown to dark purple scale that has a bristle-tip.

Distribution & Habitat

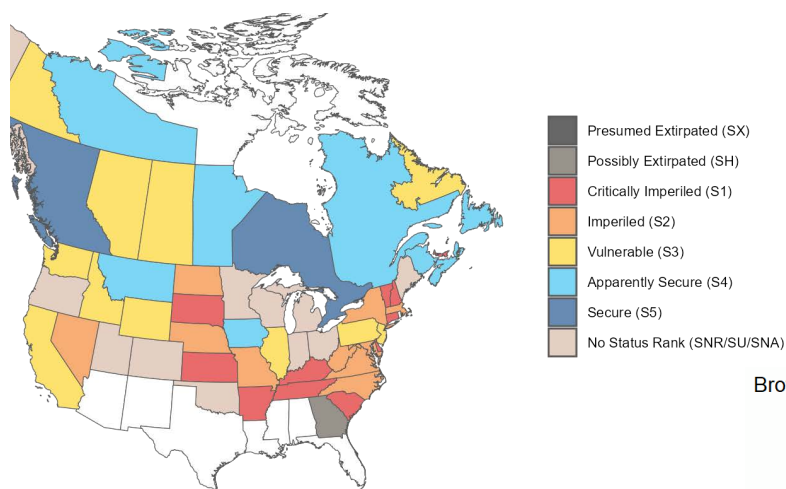
Brown sedge has a transcontinental range across North America. In Pennsylvania, it occurs mostly in the southern half of the state. The species grows in wetlands, including marshes, swales, meadows, and swamps, especially those with calcareous substrates.



Photo source: John Kunsman (PNHP)

North American State/Province Conservation Status

Map by NatureServe 2025



Current State Status

The PA Biological Survey (PABS) considers brown sedge to be a species of special concern, based on the relatively few occurrences that have been recently confirmed and its wetland habitat. It has a PA legal rarity status and a suggested rarity status of Rare.

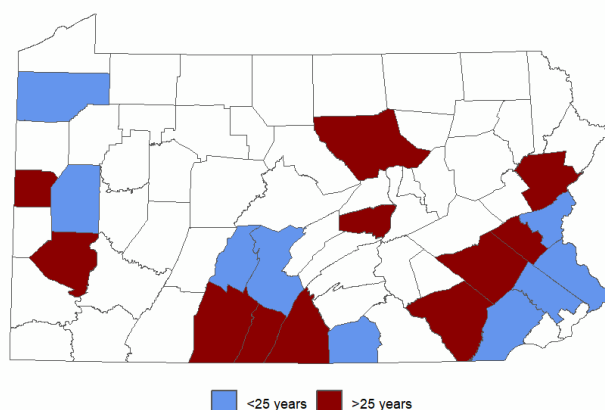
Conservation Considerations

Creating buffers around wetlands, controlling of invasive species, and protecting the hydrology will help to maintain occurrences of brown sedge.

NatureServe conservation status ranks

G5 – Globally secure; S3 – Vulnerable in Pennsylvania

Brown Sedge (*Carex buxbaumii*)



References

- NatureServe. 2025. NatureServe Explorer [web application] NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available at <https://explorer.natureserve.org> (Accessed: May 8, 2025)
- Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program. 2025.
- Rhoads, A.F. and W.M. Klein, Jr. 1993. The Vascular Flora of Pennsylvania: Annotated Checklist and Atlas. American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia.
- Rhoads, A.F. and T.A. Block. 2000. The Plants of Pennsylvania: An Illustrated Manual. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia.

