

Carey's Sedge

Carex careyana

Description

Carey's sedge is a grass-like plant that reaches 1 to 2 feet (3-6 dm) in height. It grows in dense tufts and has a distinctive purplish color at the base of each leafy stem. The leaves are linear, elongate, and are relatively wide, up to $\frac{3}{4}$ inch (18 mm). The individual flowers are tiny and are grouped in all male or all female clusters along the stem. The female spikes contain 4 to 9 sac-like structures (perigynia) that are strongly triangular in cross-section and relatively large (5 to 7 mm long) when compared to related species.

Distribution & Habitat

Carey's sedge has a distribution from Minnesota east into New York, and south and west into Georgia and Oklahoma. In Pennsylvania, the few known occurrences are located in the western half of the state. The species grows in woodlands with a limestone or calcareous substrate.

North American State/Province Conservation Status

Map by NatureServe 2025

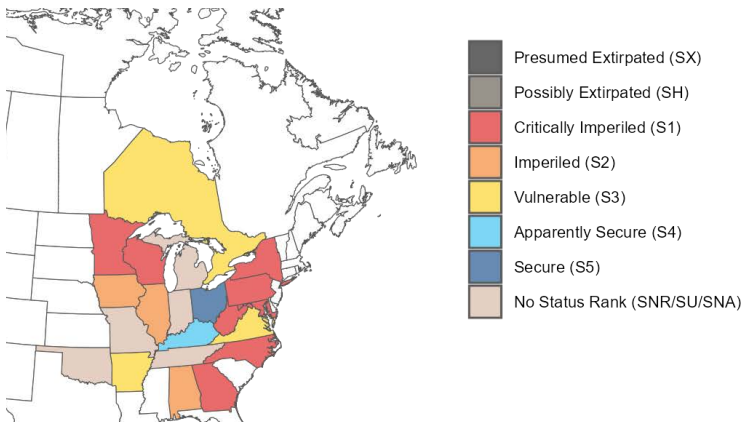


Photo source: John Kunsman (PNHP)

Current State Status

The PA Biological Survey (PABS) considers Carey's sedge to be a species of special concern, based on the very few occurrences that have been recently confirmed and its very specialized habitat. It has a PA legal rarity status and a PABS suggested rarity status of Endangered.

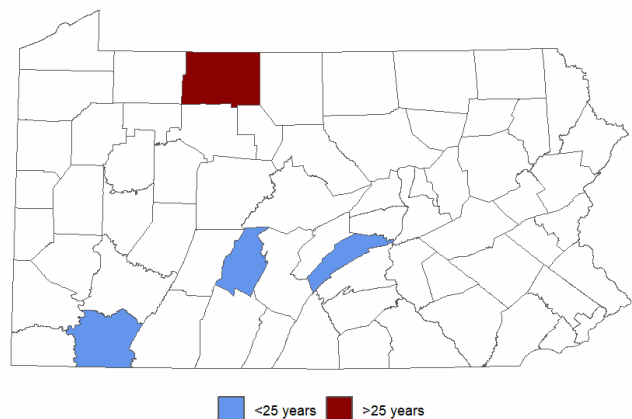
Conservation Considerations

Carey's sedge is a plant of calcareous woodlands, and has threats from quarrying, invasive species, and indiscriminate logging. Creating buffers around fragmented habitat and controlling invasive species would be beneficial in protecting occurrences.

NatureServe conservation status ranks

G4G5 – Apparently globally secure; S1– Critically imperiled in Pennsylvania

Carey's Sedge (*Carex careyana*)



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 Flora. American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia.
- Rhoads, A.F. and T.A. Block. 2000. The Plants of Pennsylvania: An Illustrated Manual. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia.