

Mead's Sedge

Carex meadii

Description

Mead's sedge is a grass-like perennial herb with a 3-sided stem that reaches 6 to 24 inches (1.5-6 dm) in height. The leaves are linear, flat, up to ¼ inch (6 mm) wide, and arise from brownish sheaths found on the lower portions of the stem. The individual flowers are minute and unisexual, with the male flowers grouped in a club-shaped spike at the top of the stem and female flowers grouped below in 1 to 3 cylindrical spikes. The female spikes support 8 to 30 sac-like structures, or perigynia, which enclose the 3-sided fruit. The fruits mature in late spring and summer.

Distribution & Habitat

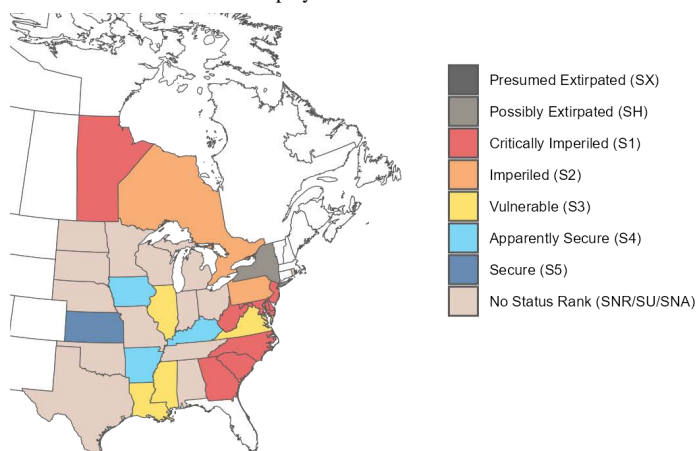
Mead's sedge has a range throughout most of eastern and midwestern North America. In Pennsylvania, it has been documented historically in scattered counties. It grows in damp or seasonally wet meadows, grasslands, and marshes, particularly on serpentine or diabase substrates.



Photo source: John Kunsman (PNHP)

North American State/Province Conservation Status

Map by NatureServe 2025



Current State Status

The PA Biological Survey (PABS) considers Mead's sedge to be a species of special concern, based on the few occurrences that have been recently confirmed and its specialized habitat. It has a PA legal rarity status of Undetermined and has been assigned a suggested rarity status of Endangered by PABS. Fewer than 15 populations are currently known from the state.

Conservation Considerations

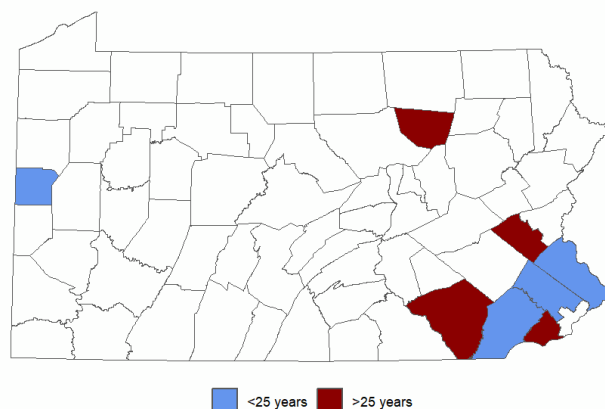
The viability of populations of this species and its habitat may be enhanced by creating buffers around wetlands, controlling invasive species, and protecting the natural hydrology around wetlands. Active management – such as fire, mowing, or invasive species removal – may be required to maintain the proper successional stage at sites where it grows.

NatureServe conservation status ranks

G5 – Globally secure;

S1 – Critically imperiled in Pennsylvania

Mead's Sedge (*Carex meadii*)



Blue <25 years Red >25 years

References

- NatureServe. 2025. NatureServe Explorer [web application] NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available at <https://explorer.natureserve.org> (Accessed: May 8, 2025)
- Rhoads, A.F. and T.A. Block. 2007. The Plants of Pennsylvania: An Illustrated Manual. 2nd edition. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia.