



Carex capitata. (A) Inflorescences, (B) pistillate scales, (C) perigynia, (D) achenes (achene on left with rachilla). B through D: Left—dorsal view; right—ventral view.

Carex capitata L.

Capitate sedge

HABIT: Loosely to densely tufted from short-creeping, scaly, purplish red rhizomes. **Culms:** Slender, wiry, purplish red at base, 10-35 cm tall, shorter to longer than the leaves, old leaves present, **aphyllopodic**.

LEAVES: 2-4, borne on the lower third of the culm, shorter to longer than the culms. **Blades:** Involute, filiform, stiff, glabrous or with scaberulous margins, pale green, 1 mm wide. **Sheaths:** Truncate at the mouth.

BRACTS: None.

SPIKES: Solitary, **androgynous**, globose or ovoid to lanceolate, generally brownish green, 4-15 mm long, 3-7 mm wide; perigynia spreading or ascending.

PISTILLATE SCALES: Orbicular to broadly ovate with an obtuse tip, shorter and narrower than the perigynia, dark brown with broad white-hyaline margins and apex.

PERIGYNIA: Ovate to orbicular, sessile and broadly rounded below, plano-convex, thin-margined, 2-3.5 mm long, 1.3-2 mm wide. **Nerves:** Absent or few dorsally. **Beaks:** Slender-conic, abruptly contracted, terete, glabrous, greenish or light to dark brown, 0.6-1 mm long, obliquely cleft, slightly hyaline-tipped.

ACHENES: Quadrate-ovate, lenticular, 1-1.8 mm long, 0.5-1.2 mm wide, partially filling the perigynium; rachilla well-developed. **Stigmas:** 2.

HABITAT AND DISTRIBUTION: Rare or local. Usually in open, wet places, but sometimes in drier sites at **high elevations**. Circumboreal. In North America from Alaska to Hudson Bay and irregularly southward to California, Nevada, Utah, Wyoming, and New Hampshire. **July-August**.