



Carex mertensii. (A) Inflorescence, (B) pistillate scales, (C) perigynia, (D) achenes. B through D: Left—dorsal view; right—ventral view.

Carex mertensii Prescott
Merten sedge

HABIT: Sparsely to densely clustered from short rhizomes. **Culms:** Erect, sharply triangular and narrowly winged, very rough on the angles, 3-12 dm tall, **aphyllopodic**.

LEAVES: 3-6, scattered on the lower one-half of the culm. **Blades:** Flat with slightly revolute margins, 3-10 mm wide. **Sheaths:** Rather loose, brownish-tinged, membranous and hyaline ventrally.

BRACTS: The lowest leaflike, sheathless or nearly so, exceeding the inflorescence; the upper reduced.

SPIKES: 5-10, drooping, cylindric, reddish tan to stramineous, 1-4 cm long, 7-9 mm wide. **Terminal:** Evidently **gynaecandrous**, varying to almost entirely staminate. **Lateral: Pistillate** or with a few staminate flowers at the base, closely flowered; perigynia appressed-ascending.

PISTILLATE SCALES: Ovate-lanceolate with the tip acute or mucronate, much narrower and shorter than the perigynia, exposing much of their margins, dark reddish brown with a conspicuous, pale-nerved center and narrow hyaline margins.

PERIGYNIA: Broadly ovate or obovate, very thin and flattened except where distended by the achene, rounded at the base, abruptly contracted at the apex, papery, light green, becoming whitish or pale brown, red-spotted to reddish toward the beak, 4-5.4 mm long, 2.1-3.5 mm wide. **Nerves:** Finely few-nerved on both faces; marginal nerves present. **Beaks:** Slender, very short, reddish-tipped, entire or emarginate, 0.1-0.7 mm long.

ACHENES: Oblong-obovoid, trigonous, stipitate, yellowish brown to silvery brown, 1.3-2 mm long, 0.7-1.1 mm wide. **Stigmas:** 3.

HABITAT AND DISTRIBUTION: Locally common. Open rocky slopes and wet places in forests. **Low to high elevations.** Alaska and Yukon south to Washington, Oregon, California (Klamath Mountains), central Idaho, and western Montana. **May-August.**