



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

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*Carex backii* Boott  
Back sedge

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**SYNONYM:** *C. saximontana* Mack.

**HABIT:** Cespitose, forming dense mats from very short rhizomes. **Culms:** Slender, weak, narrowly winged and serrulate on the angles, enlarged upward beneath the inflorescence, 1-2.5 dm tall, shorter than the leaves, slightly **phyllopodic**.

**LEAVES:** 2-6, clustered near the base. **Blades:** Flat, thick, minutely papillate, deep green, 2-6 mm wide. **Sheaths:** Thin and hyaline ventrally, truncate at the mouth.

**BRACTS:** None. Lower pistillate scales somewhat bractlike.

**SPIKES:** 1-3, **androgynous**, few-flowered; lower spikes, if present, short-pedunculate and basal; staminate portion inconspicuous and surpassed by the uppermost perigynium; perigynia erect on a winged, zigzag rachis.

**PISTILLATE SCALES:** Bractlike or leaflike, the lowest up to 4 cm long, oblong-obovate to linear, long tapering, obtuse-tipped or cuspidate, connate above the middle, tightly enclosing the rachis and concealing the perigynia, many-nerved, green.

**PERIGYNIA:** Oblong-ovoid to oblong-orbicular, two-keeled, membranous with a spongy base, substipitate, smooth, greenish, 4-6 mm long, 2.5 mm wide. **Nerves:** Numerous, faint, almost lacking. **Beaks:** Stout, tapering, two-edged, smooth, entire or obliquely cleft, obsolete to 1 mm long.

**ACHENES:** Triangular-globose, granular, stipitate, yellowish green to black, about 3 mm long. **Stigmas:** 3.

**HABITAT AND DISTRIBUTION:** Dry forests and riparian woods at **mid elevations**. British Columbia to Quebec, south to Washington, Oregon (Wallowa Mountains and Steens Mountain), Idaho, Utah, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, Massachusetts, and New York. Infrequent in the Intermountain Region. **May-July**.