



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

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*Carex illota* Bailey  
Sheep sedge, small-headed sedge

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**HABIT:** Cespitose from short, creeping rhizomes. **Culms:** Slender but stiff, roughened at the angles below the inflorescence, 1-3(4) dm tall, exceeding the leaves, slightly **aphyllopodic**.

**LEAVES:** 2-5, clustered near the base. **Blades:** Flat or channeled, 1-3 mm wide. **Sheaths:** Tight, truncate to shallowly concave and sometimes yellowish brown at the mouth.

**BRACTS:** Small, inconspicuous, short awned, scarious golden to dark brown with narrow hyaline margins.

**SPIKES:** 3-6, short, sessile, **gynaecandrous**, dark brown to greenish black or more commonly black, indistinguishable and closely aggregated into a dense, suborbicular head that is lobate in outline, 6-15 mm long and 5-12 mm wide; perigynia spreading with exerted tips, giving a ragged appearance to the spike.

**PISTILLATE SCALES:** Broadly ovate with an obtuse tip, shorter and narrower than the perigynia, dark brown or greenish black with a yellowish-brown center and very narrow, obscure, gold-hyaline margins.

**PERIGYNIA:** Lanceolate to narrowly ovate, plano-convex, sharp-edged above, not wing-margined, raised margins below, slightly spongy at the base, smooth, greenish-fuscous to brown or brownish-stramineous toward the base, 2.5-3.2 mm long, 0.9-1.3 mm wide. **Nerves:** Several, faint dorsally; none or few, obscure ventrally. **Beaks:** Tapering, smooth, entire margined throughout, not serrulate, 0.8-2 mm long, dark at the dorsal suture, obliquely cleft at the tip.

**ACHENES:** Broadly oval, lenticular, substipitate, yellowish brown, 1.2-1.5 mm long, 0.8-1 mm wide. **Stigmas:** 2.

**HABITAT AND DISTRIBUTION:** Often abundant on wet mountain meadows, boggy montane lakeshores, and streambanks. **High altitudes.** British Columbia, Washington, and northwestern Montana, south to California, Nevada, central Idaho, Utah, and Colorado. **July-August.**

**SIMILAR SPECIES:** See appendix, table 9.