



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

Carex paupercula Michx.
Little sedge, poor sedge

HABIT: Loosely clustered in small tufts from short or long rhizomes; roots covered with a yellowish brown tomentum. **Culms:** Slender, reddish brown to brown at the base, 1-8 dm tall, exceeding the leaves, often **phyllopodic**, old leaves persistent.

LEAVES: 3-12, borne on the lower one-half of the culm. **Blades:** Flat, sometimes with slightly revolute margins, 2-4 mm wide. **Sheaths:** Very thin, plain or red-dotted ventrally, concave at the mouth.

BRACTS: The lowest leaflike, sheathless to slightly sheathing, reddish at the node, 2-10 cm long, equaling or exceeding the inflorescence; the upper reduced.

SPIKES: 1-5, pedunculate, bicolored with green and blackish brown or chestnut. **Terminal: Staminate** or occasionally with a few perigynia above, erect to somewhat lax, linear, 4-15 mm long and 2-4 mm wide. **Lateral: Pistillate**, often with a few staminate flowers at the base, erect or nodding, suborbicular to oblong, 4-22 mm long, 4-8 mm wide; perigynia ascending, the spreading pistillate scales giving the spikes a ragged appearance.

PISTILLATE SCALES: Lanceolate to ovate-lanceolate, tapering at the apex, often with a short awn, narrower and longer than the perigynia, light to dark brown; midrib prominent, with or without a green midstripe.

PERIGYNIA: Elliptic to ovate, compressed-trigonous, thick, occasionally somewhat flattened and two-edged, coriaceous, densely papillate, stipitate, stramineous or glaucous-green, often dark brown toward the apex, 2.2-3(3.8) mm long, 1.7-2.2 mm wide. **Nerves:** 3-6, obscure to prominent on each face; marginal nerves prominent. **Beaks:** Absent or very short, entire or emarginate, 0.1 mm long.

ACHENES: Ovoid-oblong, trigonous, slightly tapered to the base, apiculate, yellowish green becoming brownish, 2 mm long, 1.2 mm wide, loosely enveloped in the perigynium. **Stigmas:** 3.

HABITAT AND DISTRIBUTION: Infrequent or rare in sphagnum bogs and wet meadows at **middle elevations**. Circumboreal. In the Intermountain area in Washington, Nevada (Elko County), northern Idaho, Utah (Uinta Mountains), Wyoming, and Colorado. **June-August.**

SIMILAR SPECIES: See *C. limosa*.