



Maine Department of Conservation  
Natural Areas Program

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*Carex capillaris* L.

Capillary Sedge

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**Habitat:** Damp, springy, or mossy calcareous woods, thickets, shores, and wooded swamps. [Rocky summits and outcrops (non-forested, upland); Non-tidal rivershore (non-forested, seasonally wet); Forested wetland; Open wetland, not coastal nor rivershore (non-forested, wetland)]

**Range:** Arctic/alpine regions of Canada south to New England, and west across the northern U.S. to Saskatchewan.

**Phenology:** Fruits late June - August.

**Family:** Cyperaceae



Illustration from Britton & Brown's Illustrated Flora of the Northern United States and Canada, 2nd ed.

**Aids to Identification:** Identification of species of the *Carex* genus is usually difficult and dependent upon rather technical characters. *C. capillaris* is the sole species in our region in the section *Capillares*. It is identified by its densely tufted growth, cluster of basal leaves, spreading pistillate spikes, and its 2-ribbed, short-beaked, elliptic perigynia, 2.4-3.3mm long.

**Ecological characteristics:** In Maine this sedge is known to occur in a variety of calcium-rich, wet habitats, including ledges, talus slopes, ditches, cedar swamps, and bogs.

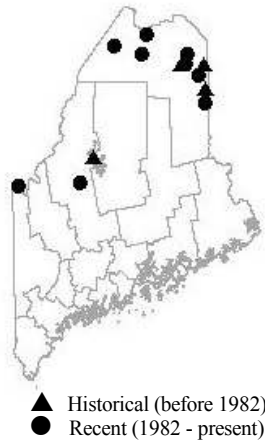
**Synonyms:** Formerly included two varieties: *C. capillaris* var. *capillaris* and *C. capillaris* var. *major*; those varieties no longer considered separate taxa.

**Rarity of *Carex capillaris***

<b>State Rank:</b>	S2	Imperiled in Maine because of rarity or vulnerability to further decline.
<b>New England Rank:</b>	Division 2	Regionally rare plant: Fewer than 20 current (seen since 1970) occurrences within New England.
<b>Global Rank:</b>	G5	Demonstrably widespread, abundant, and secure globally.

**Status of *Carex capillaris***

<b>Federal Status:</b>	None	No Federal Status.
<b>State Status:</b>	Special Concern	



### Known Distribution in Maine:

This rare plant has been documented from a total of 13 town(s) in the following county(ies): Aroostook, Oxford, Piscataquis, Somerset.

**Dates of documented observations are:** 1871, 1898, 1901, 1940, 1985 (2), 1986, 1987 (2), 1992, 2001 (3), 2002

### Reason(s) for rarity:

At southern limit of range; calcareous habitat is naturally scarce.

### Conservation considerations:

Unknown. Usually grows in semi-open areas, not under dense forest cover.

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The information in this fact sheet was downloaded from the Natural Areas Program's Biological and Conservation Database on 06 MAY 2004. We are grateful to our Botanical Advisory Group for additional information on particular species, and in particular, to Arthur Haines for his assistance with identifying characteristics and taxonomic questions. Nomenclature follows Haines and Vining's *Flora of Maine* (V.F. Thomas Press, 1998); where older works refer to a plant by another name, it is given under "Synonyms". The Natural Areas Program, within the Department of Conservation, maintains the most comprehensive source of information on Maine's rare or endangered plants and rare or exemplary natural communities, and is a member of the Association for Biodiversity Information.

If you know of locations for this plant or would like more information on this species,  
please contact the Natural Areas Program  
State House Station 93, Augusta, Maine 04333; telephone (207) 287-8044.

