

All Sedges Have Edges, But Carex Species Thrive in All Types of Conditions

Mandy Komes-Leifheit
Territory Manager –Native Plants



Natural Garden Natives®
MIDWEST GROUNDCOVERS LLC



Natural Garden Natives®
MIDWEST GROUNDCOVERS LLC

Key Considerations Before Choosing Carex Species.

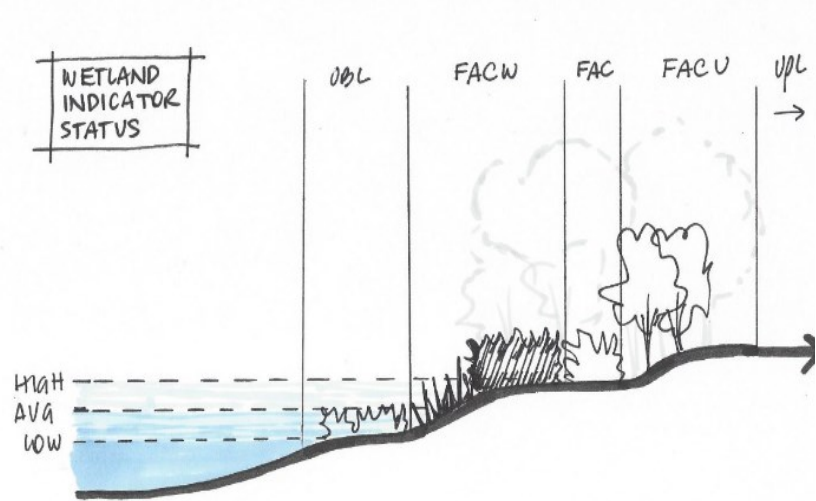
- Site Conditions
- Biodiversity
- Wildlife habitat
- Stormwater management

Know your Site Conditions

SOIL



- **OBL (Obligate Wetland Plants)**—Almost always occur in wetlands.
- **FACW (Facultative Wetland Plants)**—Usually occur in wetlands but may occur in non-wetlands.
- **FAC (Facultative Plants)**—Occur in wetlands and non-wetlands.
- **FACU (Facultative Upland Plants)**—Usually occur in non-wetlands but may occur in wetlands.
- **UPL (Upland Plants)**—Almost never occur in wetlands.



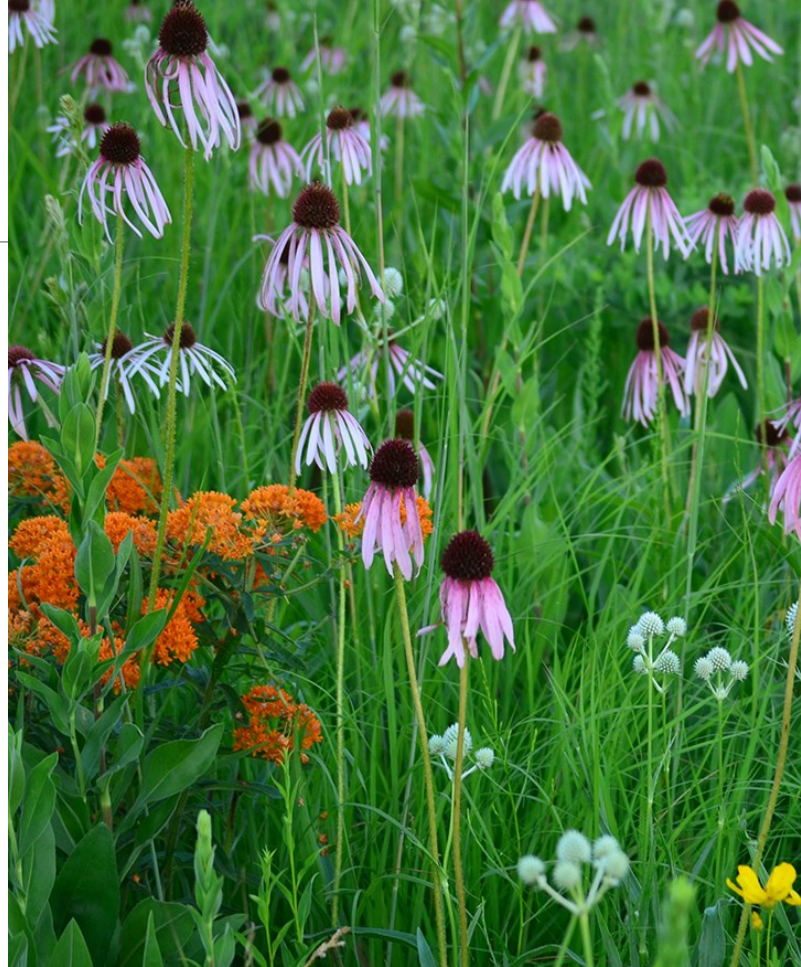
Mimic Nature

Choosing the correct plants for your application



Woodland

Shady, Dry or Moist Soils



Upland Prairie

Sunny, Dry Soils



Wet Mesic Prairie

Sunny, Wetter soils but will dry out
(rain gardens/dry detention basins)



Wildlife Value

- The seeds and foliage are food for birds and small mammals.
- Host plants for several caterpillars and butterflies (e.g., *Skippers*).
- Important cover for amphibians and ground-nesting birds.



MIDWEST
GROUNDCOVERS
LLC

Natural Garden Natives®
MIDWEST GROUNDCOVERS LLC



Restoration & Garden Use

- Native *Carex* species are increasingly used in **rain gardens**, **bioswales**, and **naturalized landscapes** due to their resilience and ecological value.
- Many tolerate **flooding and drought**, making them ideal for Midwest climate shifts.

Caterpillars of Moths, Skippers and Butterflies That Feed on Carex

Lepidopteran Species	
Scientific Name	Common Name
<i>Amphipoea americana</i> *	American Ear Moth
<i>Apamea indocilis</i> *	Ignorant Apamea
<i>Chortodes inquinata</i> *	Tufted Sedge Moth
<i>Ctenucha virginica</i> *	Virginia Ctenucha
<i>Macrochilo absorptalis</i> *	Slant-Lined Owlet
<i>Meropleon diversicolor</i> *	Multicolored Sedge Miner
<i>Munroessa icciusalis</i> *	Pondside Pyralid Moth
<i>Simyra henrici</i> *	Henry's Marsh Moth
<i>Euphyes dion</i> **	Dion Skipper
<i>Euphyes dukesi</i> **	Duke's Skipper
<i>Euphyes vestris</i> **	Dun Skipper
<i>Poanes massasoit</i> **	Mulberry Wing
<i>Polites mystic</i> **	Long Dash
<i>Satyrodes appalachia</i> ***	Appalachian Brown
<i>Satyrodes eurydice</i> ***	Eyed Brown

*moth, **skipper, ***butterfly courtesy of illinoiswildflowers.info



Ignorant Apamea



Pondside Pyralid Moth



Mulberry Wing

Landscape Function:

Groundcover Alternative – Some low-growing Carex species serve as a great alternative to turf grass, especially in shady or wet areas.

Low Maintenance – Many species are drought-tolerant and require less mowing, fertilizing, or watering compared to traditional lawns.

Deer Resistance – Many sedges are unpalatable to deer, making them useful in landscapes prone to browsing.

Seasonal Interest – Carex adds texture and movement to gardens, with fine foliage and subtle flower spikes that change throughout the year.



**MIDWEST
GROUNDCOVERS**
LLC

Natural Garden Natives®
MIDWEST GROUNDCOVERS LLC

Carex Species for your Landscape

Shade or Sun



Natural Garden Natives®
MIDWEST GROUNDCOVERS LLC

Carex albicans, White-tinged Sedge

Savanna/Woodland

Height: 12" – 18"

Width: 18" – 24"

Soil Conditions: Dry

Flower Color: Green

Bloom Time: May

Hardiness Zone: 4 To 8

A tidy clump forming perennial sedge with narrow grass-like arching leaves. Plants spread slowly from underground rhizomes and gradually form colonies. Great for dry wooded slopes.



Carex appalachica

Appalachian Sedge

Savanna/Woodland

Height: 8" – 12"

Width: 8" – 12"

Soil Conditions: Dry

Flower Color: Green

Bloom Time: April, May

Fine texture, Clumping species. Weeping appearance. Slow Growing but will steadily form an attractive colony



PHOTO COURTESY OF NORTHCREEK NURSERY

Carex blanda, Common Wood Sedge

Prairie/Savanna/Woodland

Height: 8" – 12"

Width: 12" – 18"

Soil Conditions: Moist/Well Drained

Flower Color: Green

Bloom Time: May

Hardiness Zone: 2 To 9

A nice ever-green sedge for full sun or full shade. Medium-coarse texture. Mixes well with other sedges and medium sized perennials.



Carex grayi, Common Bur Sedge

Savanna/Woodland

Height: 24" – 36"

Width: 18" – 24"

Soil Conditions: Moist

Flower Color: Brown

Bloom Time: June

Hardiness Zone: 5 To 9

Carex grayi has a very ornamental seed head and pleated foliage that has thrived in both sun and shade rain gardens. This unusual native sedge planted at the edges of ponds and fountains, in moist areas, or in decorative urns with other moisture-loving plants. A clump forming plant. It reaches three feet and produces unique, pale green seed heads that resemble three-dimensional, one-inch stars.



Carex jamesii, James Sedge

Woodland

Height: 6" – 8"

Width: 6" – 8"

Soil Conditions: Moist/Well Drained

Flower Color: Green

Bloom Time: April, May

Hardiness Zone: 4 To 8

A clump forming sedge for full to part shade. The foliage of *Carex* species are food sources for many kinds of native caterpillars, beetles and grasshoppers. Good substitute for *C. pensylvanica*.
Evergreen



Carex muskingumensis – Palm Sedge

Savanna

Height: 24" – 36"

Width: 24" – 36"

Soil Conditions: Moist/Well Drained

Flower Color: Brown

Bloom Time: May, June, July

Hardiness Zone: 4 To 9

Typically found in savannas, Palm Sedge thrives in wet-mesic to dry-mesic soils and will form robust colonies with consistent moisture. An interesting sedge for the rain garden, its spreading leaf blades resemble palm fronds. Long brown seedheads nod slightly. Many butterflies, moths and skippers use it as larval food and several species of birds consume the seeds.



Carex sprengellii, Long-beaked Sedge

Prairie/Savanna/Woodland

Height: 18" – 24"

Width: 18" – 24"

Soil Conditions: Moist

Flower Color: Green

Bloom Time: May

Hardiness Zone: 3 To 5

This is one of the showiest and most important sedges of both upland and moist woodlands in the Upper Midwest. Numerous pendulant seedheads rise on long stems from the greenish-yellow clumps. It is well behaved and makes a valuable garden companion. Although naturally occurring in woodlands, it thrives in rich soil in full sun, where the foliage will often take on an attractive chartreuse color.



Carex
plantaginea
Plantain-leaved
Sedge

Savanna/Woodland

Height: 12" – 18"

Width: 18" – 24"

Soil Conditions: Moist

Flower Color: Green

Bloom Time: May

Hardiness Zone: 4 To 8

Semi Evergreen, Pretty golden
yellow/green foliage Great sub for
Hosta.



Ecological Importance:

1.Erosion Control – Carex species have dense, fibrous root systems that stabilize soil and prevent erosion, especially along streambanks and wetlands.

2.Water Filtration – They help filter pollutants and sediments from runoff, improving water quality.

3.Wetland Habitat – Many Carex species thrive in wetlands, where they provide crucial habitat for amphibians, birds, and invertebrates.

4.Biodiversity Support – They support a wide range of wildlife, including insects (like butterflies and moths), small mammals, and birds.



**MIDWEST
GROUNDCOVERS**
LLC

Natural Garden Natives®
MIDWEST GROUNDCOVERS LLC

The Workhorse Carex Species



Natural Garden Natives®
MIDWEST GROUNDCOVERS LLC

Carex bebbii

Bebb's Oval Sedge

Prairie/Savanna

24-36"

Moist soils Height: 24" – 36"

Width: 18" – 24"

Soil Conditions: Moist

Flower Color: Green

Bloom Time: May, June

Hardiness Zone: 3 To 7

Common in open marshes and fens.
Terminal spike compact, spikelets
rounded



Carex bicknellii

Copper-shouldered Oval Sedge

Height: 24" – 36"

Width: 18" – 24"

Soil Conditions: Dry

Flower Color: Green

Bloom Time: April, May, June

Hardiness Zone: 3 To 7

Spikelets are extended at the base like an ice cream cone. Wide winged seed sacs are translucent. Attracts game, songbirds and small mammals. Not salt tolerant



Carex brevior

Plains Oval Sedge

Prairie/Savanna

Height: 8" – 12"

Width: 12" – 18"

Soil Conditions: Dry

Flower Color: Brown

Bloom Time: April, May

Hardiness Zone: 4 To 8

Sandy prairies, meadows, ditches,
and woodlands, most abundant in
dry disturbed areas.



Carex comosa

Bristly Sedge

Height: 24" – 36"

Width: 24" – 36"

Soil Conditions: Moist

Flower Color: Green

Bloom Time: July, August

Spikes on long slender stalks that droop at maturity. Prefers wet soils; sun to part shade.



Carex crinita

Fringed Sedge

Prairie/Savanna

Height: 3' – 4'

Width: 12" – 18"

Soil Conditions: Moist

Flower Color: Brown

Bloom Time: May

Robust with long, nodding spikes and strap-like leaves. Striking in appearance.



Carex annectens

Yellow Fox Sedge

Height: 24" – 36"

Width: 18" – 24"

Soil Conditions: Moist

Flower Color: Yellow

Bloom Time: May, June, July

Hardiness Zone: 2 To 9

Forms tight tufts of leaves and spikelet flowers that turn golden yellow as they mature; the root system consists of short rhizomes and fibrous root; cool season sedge.



Carex cristatella

Crested Oval Sedge

Prairie/Savanna

Height: 24" – 36"

Width: 18" – 24"

Soil Conditions: Moist

Flower Color: Green

Bloom Time: June

Found in wet woodlands and open wetlands; waterfowl food.



Carex emoryi

Riverbank Sedge

Prairie/Savanna/Woodland

Height: 18" – 24"

Width: 12" – 18"

Soil Conditions: Moist

Flower Color: Yellow

Bloom Time: May

A wetland native that forms tufts of straw colored foliage with bright green new growth. An emergent aquatic that grows well in stream banks, wet meadows and along shore lines.



Carex frankii

Bristly Cattail Sedge

Prairie/Savanna

Height: 18" – 24"

Width: 18" – 24"

Soil Conditions: Moist

Flower Color: Brown

Bloom Time: May, June, July, August, September

Grass-like leaves for wet areas; tolerates seasonal flooding.



Carex vulpinoidea

Brown Fox Sedge

Prairie/Savanna

Height: 24" – 36"

Width: 12" – 18"

Soil Conditions: Moist

Flower Color: Green

Bloom Time: June, July

Hardiness Zone: 3 To 7

Dark green foliage. Adapts to alternating levels of moisture, tolerating both wet and dry periods. Food source for grazing animals and waterfowl.



Carex stricta

Tussock Sedge

Prairie/Savanna

Height: 24" – 36"

Width: 18" – 24"

Soil Conditions: Moist

Flower Color: Green

Bloom Time: May

Hardiness Zone: 3 To 9

Prefers moist, shaded areas. Delicate foliage grows to form dense tufts. In wetter sites, the tuft forms above the water line. Spreads by rhizomes. Food for turtles, waterfowl. Tolerates seasonal flooding.





Carex Classroom at Natural Garden Natives

Thank You!

Mandy Komes-Leifheit

Mkomes-leifheit@midwestgroundcovers.com

630-742-5830



Natural Garden Natives®
MIDWEST GROUNDCOVERS LLC