

Vascular Plants of Williamson County
Carex texensis – TEXAS CARIC SEDGE [Cyperaceae]

Carex texensis (Torrey) L.H. Bailey, TEXAS CARIC SEDGE. Perennial herb, tightly clonal, rhizomatous, fibrous-rooted, many-stemmed at base, densely caespitose, moundlike, in range < 30 cm tall; monoecious; shoot with all basal leaves (to 3 leaves appear cauline but all basally attached), foliage slender, glabrous; rhizome not conspicuous (hidden beneath fibers of former leaves and scales), highly branched and becoming disconnected, units ascending with axillary bud for new shoot splitting (breaking through) leaf sheath, < 3 mm diameter, internodes 0.5–1 mm long, off-white, solid with white tissue, scales on rhizome with closely spaced veins aging fibers, acute or of longer scales obtuse, 4–6 mm long; adventitious roots nodal at base of each emergent shoot. **Stem (culm, scape):** somewhat cylindrical (not 3-sided) weakly ridged and angled, within leaf sheath < 1.3 mm diameter, exposed portion green (above the uppermost “cauline” leaf); hollow. **Leaves:** alternate (not obviously tristichous), simple with sheath; sheath closed, cylindrical and tight-fitting stem, membranous with green stripes, membranous and truncate at top; ligule at base of blade, membranous, in range 0.25–0.5 mm wide; blade linear and slender, to 135 × 2.5 mm, increasing upward for “cauline” leaves, folded (V-shaped in x-section), minutely toothed on margins, long-tapered at tip, parallel-veined with to 11 veins. **Inflorescence:** condensed panicle of spikes (“headlike” and “racemelike”), terminal, spikes (3–)5–8, the lower spikes stalked < 2 mm and upper spikes sessile, panicle 10–23 × 7–9 mm in fruit (4 mm diameter at anthesis), spikes alternate and spreading to ascending along principal axis having the first internode < 5 mm long decreasing upward, spike with 6–8(–10) pistillate florets helically alternate and closely spaced with at least 2 staminate florets at top (androgynous), bracteate, glabrous; peduncle (scape or culm) 1 mm diameter and inconspicuously angled and ridged at top, hollow; bract subtending the lowest spike closed but lacking sheath, blade spreading to suberect, slender, 35–90 mm long and > panicle, lower portion ovate to 2.5 mm long with membranous margins, green region triangular and 1-veined, blade shallowly folded (spreading V-shaped), green, minutely toothed on margins, long-tapered to fine tip, blades of successive spike bracts decreasing, only bracts 1–3 commonly visible without hand lens, upper bracts with awnlike tips (aristate) decreasing to < 1 mm long at top; axis internode of panicle concave to flat just above node beneath spike. **Staminate floret:** bractlet (floral bract or scale) membranous and folded along midvein (green midstripe), ca. 2.5 mm long, persistent in fruit. **Staminate flower:** lacking symmetry, ca. 1.5 mm across (exserted anthers); **perianth** absent; **stamens** 3, free, side-by-side; filaments 2–2.5 mm long, translucent; anthers fully exserted from bractlet, basifixed, dithecal, ca. 1.3 mm long, pale yellow (greenish in bud) with colorless tips, longitudinally dehiscent; pollen yellowish to pale yellow; **pistil** absent. **Pistillate floret:** bractlet ovate, in fruit 2.3–3 × 1.2–1.4 mm, 3-veined having stiff midvein with or without a short, slender tip (short-awned), having wide membranous margins on triangular green center, persistent and appressed to fruit; pistillate flower (ovary and lower style) enclosed in saclike perigynium (subtended by bractlet) at anthesis narrowly ovate in outline, ± 1.7 × 0.7 mm, lower portion convex on green lower side and flat on upper side colorless over ovary, upper portion from midpoint triangular tapered to a narrow orifice (neck or “beak”) and having a pair of minute points (teeth, bidentate) at tips < 0.2 mm long, margins of beak entire and green (not minutely serrate) and teeth colorless, glabrous. **Pistillate flower:**

bilateral, to 1.5 mm across (spreading stigmas), short-stalked; **perianth** absent; **stamens** absent; **pistil** 1, at anthesis ca. 3.2 mm long; ovary superior, disc-shaped (circular) strongly flattened, ± 0.6 mm, translucent, 1-chambered with 1 ovule; style 2-branched, translucent, lower portion mostly within “beak” of perigynium but exerted ca. 0.3 mm above teeth, the stigmatic branches fully exerted, divergent and arching to somewhat curved and twisted, ± 1.3 mm long, conspicuously papillate. **Fruit:** achene enclosed within perigynium, sessile on short stalk; perigynium hemi-ovoid, $2.5\text{--}3.3 \times 1.5\text{--}1.8$ mm including neck, light green with a pair of colorless fine teeth at top, venation inconspicuous to obscure, basal 1/3 wrinkled with spongy tissue on both surfaces; achene broadly ovate-biconvex, ca. 1.5×1.5 mm + persistent lower style including within perigynium, exerted portion of style present or not.

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