

Vascular Plants of Williamson County
Sphenopholis obtusata – PRAIRIE WEDGESCALE [Poaceae]

Sphenopholis obtusata (Michx.) Scribn., PRAIRIE WEDGESCALE. Perennial herb, bunchgrass, fibrous-rooted, several–many-stemmed at base, principal shoots lacking branches above subterranean base, ± erect, in range to 85 cm tall; shoots with a basal leaf and several cauline leaves. **Stems:** cylindric, node to 3 mm, internodes > sheath to 230 mm long, bent at lower nodes (geniculate), veins scabrous approaching inflorescence; internodes hollow. **Leaves:** alternate distichous, simple with sheath; sheath open, ± smooth, light green with membranous margins, the covered membranous margin wider than exposed margin, glabrous, lacking lobes (auricles) at top; ligule membranous continuous from membranous margins, toothed and jagged on margin, in range 1–3.3 mm long, often splitting downward, short-ciliate on margin; collar short; blade linear long-tapered to tip, in range 50–140 × 2–7.5 mm, the widest approaching midblade, entire, long-tapered to tip, parallel-veined with veins scarcely raised on lower surface, surface scabrous. **Inflorescence:** spikelets, in terminal, paniclelike array with to 4, unequal, appressed to ascending primary branches, at anthesis contracted and spikelike and 50–150 × < 10 mm, bracteate, lacking awns, scabrous on all axes; central axis ridged, the lower node subtended by a ledge, branch and branchlet axes flexible and green; ; primary branches to 4 per node, unequal, the longest to 28 mm long and having 15+ dense, overlapping spikelets; short portion of a stalk for each spikelet whitish and lacking scabrous teeth, spikelet having 1–2 bisexual florets, unawned. **Spikelet:** compressed side-to-side, during pollinating somewhat spreading, ca. 3 × 2 mm, with tips of lemmas exerted and > glumes, breaking below glumes resulting in abscission of entire spikelet including 2 fruits; **glumes** 2, dimorphic; strongly folded and keeled, folded ca. 1.5 × 0.2 mm, green with narrow membranous margins, 1-veined, keel scabrous; upper glume strongly folded and keeled, folded obovate and ca. 2 × 0.7 mm (subcucullate), each face half green and half membranous, 3(5)-veined, scabrous along keel, green tissue with pebblelike texture and minutely scabrous on green tissue, membranous margins jagged above midpoint; rachilla ca. 0.6 mm long, glabrous; **lemma** ca. 2.5 × 0.5 mm, < glumes, back rounded at base, mostly pale green to green approaching tip, and somewhat keeled above midpoint, outer surface textured pebblelike on green tissue, on lemma of upper floret minutely scabrous above midpoint; **palea** membranous, narrow, 1.5–1.8 × 0.35–0.4 mm, < lemma and gapping from lemma, colorless, 2-veined, 2-keeled with scabrous along keels, notched at top. **Flower:** bisexual; **perianth (lodicules)** 2, flash-shaped, ± 0.5 mm long, colorless, lower portion thickened, acuminate at tip, lacking hairs; **stamens** 3, free; filaments 1–1.5 mm long, whitish; anthers dorsifixed, dithecal, exerted, in range ca. 0.5 mm long, white aging cream-colored, longitudinally dehiscent; pollen colorless; **pistil** 1, ca. 1.2 mm long; ovary superior, linear-ellipsoid, ca. 0.7 × 0.15–0.2 mm, part greenish, glabrous, 1-chambered with 1 ovule; styles 2, diverging from top of ovary, colorless, upper portion stigmatic and branched exerted from middle of lemma. **Fruit:** achene (caryopsis), narrowly ellipsoid, ca. 1.5 × 0.4 mm.

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