

# Fox sedge (*Carex vulpinoidea*)

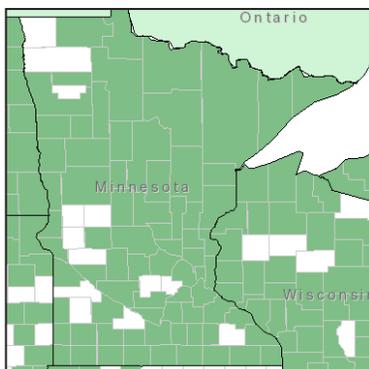
## Family: Sedge (*Cyperaceae*)

**DESCRIPTION:** One of the first plants to green up in the spring, grasslike sedges bring color to gardens and help to suppress weeds. Fox sedge is among more than 150 native Minnesota species. A mounded, cool-season perennial, fox sedge grows up to 3 feet tall. It prefers shorelines, wetlands, wet open woods and wet prairies. It thrives in full to partial sun, but tolerates many soil types and light conditions. Plants bloom in June and July. It's named for seed heads resembling a fox tail. "Vulpes" is Latin for "fox."

**USES:** Fox sedge's upright structure makes it a focal point. Its short and erect stature helps support surrounding plants. The plant feeds many insect species. Wetland songbirds and waterfowl eat the seeds and take cover in the plant itself.

**REFERENCES:**

- [Minnesota Wildflowers](#)
- [Missouri Botanical Garden](#)
- [Illinois Wildflowers](#)



Range Map: NRCS Plants Database



Photo Credit: BWSR

**STATEWIDE WETLAND INDICATOR**

**STATUS:** XGP:  
FACW; MW:  
FACW; NCNE:  
OBL

**ID:** Seed heads emerge from the center of a clump of bright green, narrow, grasslike blades. The leaf sheath is marked by horizontal lines. Cross-pollinated by wind, female and male flower parts emerge in 2- to 4-inch-long clusters atop the same spikelets. Each spikelet has seeds wrapped in a casing called perigynium. ID requires a magnifying glass to see the size, quantity and shape of pikelets' perigynia and florets.

**SIMILAR SPECIES:**

The size of seed head casings and the width of leaf blades distinguish the smallest, yellow-fruit sedge (*Carex annectens*), from the largest, awl-fruit sedge (*Carex st pata*). Soft fox sedge (*Carex conjuncta*) is in the middle.

## Planting Recommendations

Fox sedge works well in the basin of rain gardens, and can withstand temporary sediment deposits where water enters the garden. As part of a matrix of sedges at the base of rain gardens and other stormwater plantings, it can help suppress weeds and reduce the need for wood mulch. Boneset, blue lobelia, blue flag iris, and Bebb's sedge are good companion plants for rain gardens or shorelines. Growing in drifts of seven

or more in a garden, the sedges' bright green color and fountain shape complement other species with vertical lines and repetition. Faster-growing potted plants may be the best choice for smaller gardens. Seed is the most economical option for large restorations. Because seeds need about 60 days of cold moist stratification, fox sedge is often surface-seeded in late fall so over-wintering breaks seeds' dormancy.

**Developed by Julien Munezero**

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