

# Sprengel's sedge (*Carex sprengelii*)

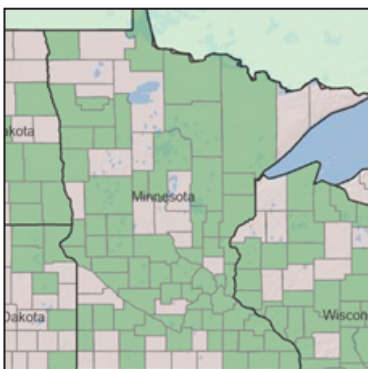
## Family: Sedge (*Carex*)

**DESCRIPTION:** Only a small percentage of Minnesota's 150-some *Carex* species grow in upland forests. Sprengel's sedge is well-adapted to these conditions. Widely distributed across the state, it's common in mesic and dry forests. It also grows in savannas, floodplains, meadows and along streambanks. Cascading leaves can grow more than 2 feet long.

**USES:** The ability of Sprengel's sedge to grow on rocky slopes makes it effective at stabilizing forested hillsides affected by invasive shrubs, earthworms, grazing deer and heavy rains. It is also beneficial on woodland streambanks and the side slopes of shaded biofiltration areas and rain gardens. Its clump-forming nature makes it well-suited for borders in woodland gardens. The sedge provides cover and food for small mammals and insects; it's a source of seeds for songbirds and game birds.

### REFERENCES:

[Minnesota Wildflowers](#)  
[USDA Plants Database](#)



Range Map Credit: NRCS Plants Database



Photo Credit: Paul Erdmann, BWSR

## Planting Recommendations

Sprengel's sedge is available in containers from many native plant nurseries. It can be purchased as seed (known as achenes) or harvested by hand in late summer. The seeds require a period of cold, moist stratification to germinate. Late fall is the best time to sow so seeds can break dormancy over the winter. In the garden, individual clumps can be separated by cutting with

a shovel or garden knife, or by pulling them apart. When separating clumps, it's important to keep roots moist, and then water the new plantings sufficiently — particularly if they're transplanted shortly before winter. Good companion plants include wild geranium, Jack-in-the-pulpit, violets, rue anemone, hepatica, ferns, bottlebrush grass and other woodland sedges.

### STATEWIDE WETLAND INDICATOR

**STATUS:** GP: FACU,  
MW: FAC, NCNE:  
FAC

**ID:** Sprengel's sedge is larger than most other woodland sedges. It grows in dense clumps up to 2 feet tall. Stem bases are green and leaves are M-shaped in cross-section. Flower spikes are on long, slender, drooping stalks. Male (staminate) flowers tend to be at the tip with female (pistillate) flowers in loose spikes slightly below. The perigynia, the structures that contain the achenes, are rounded in shape with two veins and a beak.

### SIMILAR SPECIES:

Graceful sedge (*Carex gracillima*) is another woodland sedge that grows in clumps about 2 feet tall. It can be found in the same forest types, but graceful sedge grows in soils with slightly higher moisture levels and is found in ravines and at the base of slopes. It has reddish-brown bases and narrow, pistillate spikes that are longer than Sprengel's sedge.

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