

# Lake sedge (*Carex lacustris*)

## Family: Sedge (*Cyperaceae*)

**DESCRIPTION:** One of the most common Minnesota sedges, lake sedge is found throughout central and northern Minnesota. It commonly dominates fens and shallow marshes, and also occurs in lakes, streamside fresh meadows, swamps, alder thickets, shrub carrs and wooded bogs.

**USES:** Lake sedge is used in shoreline and wetland restorations, where its dense roots and rhizomes help to prevent erosion. Its seeds are an important food source for several species of shorebirds and waterfowl. Some species of beetles, moths and butterflies find food or shelter in its leaves, seeds and roots.

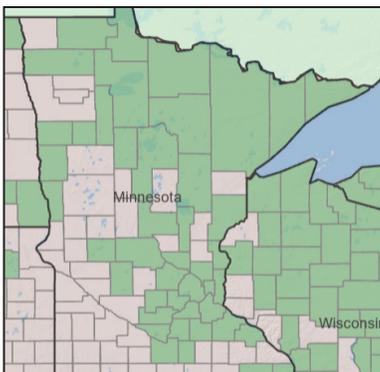
### REFERENCES:

[The Friends of the Wild Flower Garden](#)

[Minnesota Wildflowers](#)

Sedges and Rushes of Minnesota;  
Welby R. Smith

Factors Affecting Revegetation of  
*Carex lacustris* and *Carex stricta* from  
Rhizomes; Leslie A. Yetka and Susan  
M. Galatowisch, Restoration Ecology,  
2002



Range Map Credit: NRCS Plants Database



Photo Credit: Laura Laughlin, MPCA

**STATEWIDE  
WETLAND  
INDICATOR STATUS:**  
OBL

**ID:** Leaves are among the widest sedge leaves, ranging up to 0.75 inch wide with a long taper. The leaves are light green or bluish with a lighter green underside. In cross-section, the leaves are M-shaped. Basal leaf sheaths are typically dark reddish, usually with shredding fibrous strands that look like a ladder. The ligule, a papery white membrane located where leaf sheath and blade meet, forms a triangle that is longer than it is wide. Flowering stalks, which are shorter than the leaves, bloom from mid-June through July, producing long, tapered fruits. It produces relatively large seeds, slightly longer than one-sixteenth of an inch.

### SIMILAR SPECIES:

Slough sedge, which is found in similar habitats, has leaf sheaths that are attached tightly to the stem and hairy near the summit. Lake sedge is essentially hairless throughout.

## Planting Recommendations

Lake sedge is fairly easy to establish from seed when sowed in appropriate habitats, typically wet to moist soils in partial shade to full sun. Germination is greatly improved by 60 days of cold-moist stratification or by planting in the fall. Lake sedge seeds are available from several native plant nurseries. Studies have shown that transplanting a cutting or a fragment

from a parent plant is most successful in the spring, with the best survival in saturated conditions near the water's edge. Like many sedges, it is a cool-season plant, growing actively during the spring and fall when soil temperatures are cool. Other robust aquatic emergent plants such as bulrush, arrowhead and bur-reed make good companion plants.

**Developed by Mark C. Gernes**, a wetland ecologist with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency who monitors wetland quality statewide using plants as indicators.

