

Carex praegracilis W. Boott, CLUSTERED FIELD SEDGE, FREEWAY SEDGE, BLACK SEDGE. Perennial herb, clonal, rhizomatous, fibrous-rooted, 20–75 cm tall; monoecious or dioecious; shoots with only basal leaves, glabrous; rhizomes horizontal and long-creeping, 2–5 mm diameter, covered with appressed scales, scales ovate, dull dark brown and striped. **Stems:** cylindric (lower stem) to sharply 3-sided, tough, flexible, flat on sides, minutely toothed on edges; solid. **Leaves:** alternate tristichous, simple with sheath; sheath closed, with thick, truncate rim, not shredding to form fibrous connections but often splitting; ligule \pm 0.2 mm long; blade typically V-shaped base-to-tip (flat), linear, $< 450 \times 1\text{--}3$ mm, tough, bright green, glabrous, minutely toothed on margins and along lower midrib, parallel-veined, upper surface glossy. **Inflorescence:** unisexual spikelets in terminal, racemelike panicles, spikelets to 10 in dense cluster, $8\text{--}45 \times (4\text{--})6\text{--}10$ mm, pistillate inflorescence the narrowest, spikelets mostly 1 per node, short-stalked, generally overlapping but a space at base of inflorescence, pistillate flowers, or staminate flowers, if monoecious then generally staminate flowers above and > 3 pistillate spikelets below, the lowest spikelets sometimes all staminate, bracteate, glabrous; inflorescence bract (involucral bract) appressed, awned-ovate, 12 mm long, green with scarious margins at base but aging brown on central area and midvein, the awn ca. 6 mm long, minutely toothed; bract subtending spikelet like inflorescence bract but slightly shorter. **Spikelet:** narrowly fusiform, $< 10(15)$ mm long, axis 3-sided or \pm elliptic in \times -section, minutely toothed along edges; bractlets (floral bracts) not in vertical rows, appressed, short-awned, 1.5–4 mm long, keeled, scarious on margins, aging golden brown. **Staminate flower:** **perianth** absent; **stamens** 3, free, exserted; filament length = bract length, white; anthers dithecal, 4-sided, linear, 2.5–3 mm long, with a minute, short-hairy protuberance on tip, longitudinally dehiscent; pollen light yellow; **pistil** absent. **Pistillate flower:** **perianth** absent; **stamens** absent; **pistil** 1, enclosed by the saclike perigynium; perigynium strongly compressed-ovoid narrowed at base, the widest ca. midpoint, ca. 1 mm long, thin and pithy, greenish but paler approaching tip tapered to a beak, minutely toothed on margins, beak ca. 1/2 length of perigynia, open to accommodate included style and the lowermost stigmas, asymmetrically notched or divided on outer side but not inner side of beak; ovary superior, ellipsoid, 1-chambered with 1 ovule; style 0.7–1 mm long, 2-branched with 2 exserted stigmas; stigmas reflexed, threadlike, 4–5 mm long, colorless, papillate, persistent. **Fruit:** achene enclosed in perigynium, subsessile on short stalk, strongly compressed-ovoid, (2.2–)2.6–3.7 mm long, dull brown to nearly black, flat on 1 face and convex on other face, nearly veinless; beak 0.7–1.2 mm long, obscurely 2-toothed at nearly colorless tip, glabrous. Early March–May.

Native. Perennial herb known from several coastal localities growing in moist, sandy flats, from Temescal Canyon westward. *Carex praegracilis* clones via long rhizomes to form a dense patch, so that each patch may be either monoecious (both staminate and pistillate florets) or dioecious and of just one sex.

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