

Carex senta Boott, SWAMP CAREX. Perennial herb, rhizomatous, fibrous-rooted, many-stemmed at base, forming dense clump, erect, 30–90+ cm tall, often taller than wide; monoecious; shoots with old leaves persisting and covering lower plant, somewhat scabrous, glabrous; rhizomes with very short internodes, covered with closed leaf sheaths and scales, the scales awl-like, glossy and striped dark brown and purple, acute-inrolled under (revolute) at tip, grading into leaf sheaths; vertical roots relatively thick, 1.5–2 mm diameter, densely velveteen (velutinous) with golden brown hairs from blackish rind. **Stems:** sharply 3-sided, < 2 mm wide, tough and flexible, green, angles acute, sides concave or \pm flat, edges minutely toothed; hollow. **Leaves:** alternate tristichous, simple with sheath; sheath closed, when shredded leaving a staggered, chevronlike pattern of veins on side opposite blade; blade \pm folded at tip and becoming V-shaped in \times -section at sheath, linear, to 410 \times 3–5 mm, tough, bright green, minutely toothed on margins and sometimes on the lower midrib above midblade, long-tapered at tip, parallel-veined, upper surface glossy. **Inflorescence:** “spikelets” (spikes) unisexual or having 2 sexes per spikelet, in terminal, leafy arrays, array with \pm 5 spikelets, bracteate, glabrous; bracts subtending spikelet dimorphic, of lower 1 or 2 spikelets leaflike with sheath, the sheath < 4 mm long, blackish purple on margin, with lobes (auricles) at top, the blade linear, > spikelet (not the entire inflorescence), flat, minutely toothed on membranous margins; bracts subtending upper spikelets rudimentary and bladeless, oblong-oval and short-serrately awned. **Spikelet:** narrowly fusiform to club-shaped or cylindric, 15–55 mm long, densely flowered but the lowest spikelets sometimes with basal flowers spaced 1–4 mm apart, basal 1–3 spikelets pistillate (sometimes staminate at tip), upper 2–3 spikelets staminate (sometimes pistillate mid-spikelet), mostly sessile but terminal staminate spikelet (sometimes pistillate spikelet) short-stalked to 3 mm long; staminate spikelet 5 mm diameter at midpoint, pistillate spikelet 5–9 mm diameter at midpoint; bractlets (floral scales) overlapping like shingles (imbricate) in vertical rows, appressed, oblong-ovate to obovate and 3.5–4 \times 1.5–2 mm (staminate) or elliptic to oblong-lanceolate and 2–2.5 \times 0.7–1 mm (pistillate), purplish black with tannish (whitish) midstripe and occasionally colorless at tip and on margins, obtuse at tip, on staminate spikelets with 1(–3) ribs in center. **Staminate flower:** **perianth** absent; **stamens** 3, free, exserted; filaments 2 mm long, translucent; anthers basifixed, dithecal, 1.6–2.4 mm, light yellow, longitudinally dehiscent; pollen light yellow; **pistil** absent. **Pistillate flower:** enclosed by saclike perigynium, perigynium ovoid strongly compressed front-to-back, \pm 2 \times 1 mm, whitish, thin and delicate, beaked, the beak < 0.2 mm long, open to accommodate style and minutely notched; **perianth** absent; **stamens** absent; **pistil** 1; ovary superior, ellipsoid, 0.5 mm long, 1-chambered with 1 ovule; style \pm 2.5 mm long, 2-branched, the branches exserted from bractlet at tip, threadlike and stigmatic, ca. 2 mm long, straight or not, papillate, persistent. **Fruit:** achene enclosed in perigynium; perigynium elliptic to elliptic-oblong flattened front-to-back, 3–3.5 \times 1.2–1.5 mm, yellow ochre paler at tip and dark brown at base and sparsely to moderately dotted reddish brown, weakly leathery, short-tapered at base (\pm 0.3 mm long), ribbed on margins, tapered to \pm beaked at tip, beak to 0.2 mm long and having an oblique orifice, with midvein but often obscurely veined or sometimes with 3–4 veins per surface, glabrous; achene obovoid flattened front-to-back and with beak (persistent style base), 1.6–1.8 \times 1.1–1.3 mm (excluding beak), light yellow ochre to light yellowish, tapered to narrowly tapered at base. Early February–mid-May.

Native. Perennial herb forming a dense, grasslike clump, growing fairly commonly along rocky streambeds in shade. *Carex senta* is the most common species of the genus in range. At least some of the “spikelets” have short stalks, and the style is two-branched and persists as a beak on the achene. In range the perigynium is narrower than widths reported elsewhere.

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