

## *Carex praeceptorium* Mackenzie

teacher's sedge  
Cyperaceae (Sedge Family)

**Status:** State Review Group 1

**Rank:** G4G5SNR

**General Description:** Adapted from Hitchcock et al. (1969):  
*Carex praeceptorium* is a perennial sedge arising from rather short rhizomes. It is 4 to 12 in. (10-30 cm) tall and has loosely to densely tufted hollow stems, and lowermost leaves often reduced to small scales. The leaves are all borne near the base, are equal to or shorter than the stems, and are 1/16 to 1/8 in. (1.5-2.5 mm) wide. The short bracts are inconspicuous, sheathless, and mostly thin, translucent, and shortly awn-tipped. There are usually 4 to 6 spikes that are 1/4 to 1/2 in. (5-12 mm) long, attached directly to the stalks, and clustered but readily distinguishable to the naked eye. The female flowers are borne above the male flowers on each spike, or sometimes some of the spikes are apparently entirely pistillate (female-flowered). The scales of the female flowers are brownish and translucent, with a firmer, often greenish midrib, and are mostly shorter than the perigynium (a specialized bract that is wrapped around the female flower). There are usually 10-25 perigynia that are commonly somewhat paler than the scales, but often the exposed parts are brownish. The perigynia are 1/16 to 1/2 in. (1.7-2.5 mm) long, flat on one side and convex on the other, with a conspicuous dorsal suture, and several nerves on each side. The nerves are slightly raised and often somewhat darker than the rest of the body, which is very minutely rough-textured, more or less elliptic, and with a short beak or small slender point that is less than 0.5 mm long.

**Identification Tips:** *Carex praeceptorium* closely resembles *C. canescens*, and can be distinguished by the following. *C. praeceptorium* is 4 to 12 in. (10-30 cm) tall, with 4-6 densely clustered spikes that are brownish colored, and the dorsal suture of the perigynia commonly extends the length of the beak, whereas *C. canescens* is often over 12 in. (30 cm) tall, with 4-8 spikes (the lower spikes are not clustered with the others), that are silvery green to pale grayish or straw colored, and the dorsal suture of the perigynium is short, poorly developed and does not extend the length of the beak. As with all members of the sedge family, a technical key is required for identification.

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Known distribution  
of *Carex praeceptorium*  
in Washington



● Current (1980+)  
○ Historic (older than 1980)

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**Phenology:** In Washington the species was observed in June and August.

**Range:** The species occurs in British Columbia to California, east to Wyoming, Colorado and Montana. In Washington occurrences have been found in Skagit, Pend Oreille, and Chelan counties.

**Habitat:** In Washington this species was found in two habitats: a sphagnum bog, and very wet shores around a lake, from 650 to 6320 feet (198-1926 m) elevation. Associated species include salal (*Gaultheria shallon*), alpine laurel (*Kalmia occidentalis*), sedges (*Carex* spp.) and rushes (*Juncus* spp.).

**Ecology:** This species is typically found in wet places such as bogs, meadows, tundra, and banks of streams at high elevations.

**State Status Comments:** Because this species was recently added to the Washington rare plant list, not much is known about the degree of its rarity in the state at this time.

**Inventory Needs:** Other bogs and lakeshores at higher elevation in Washington should be surveyed for possible occurrences.

**Threats and Management Concerns:** As with all wetland species, this species is vulnerable to changes in hydrology.

**Comments:** Hitchcock et al. (1969) refers to *Carex praeceptorium* as *C. praeceptorium* (Mackenzie).

### References:

Hitchcock, C.L., A. Cronquist, M. Ownbey, J.W. Thompson. 1969. *Vascular Plants of the Pacific Northwest Part 1: Vascular Cryptogams, Gymnosperms, and Monocotyledons*. University of Washington Press, Seattle, WA. 914 pp.