

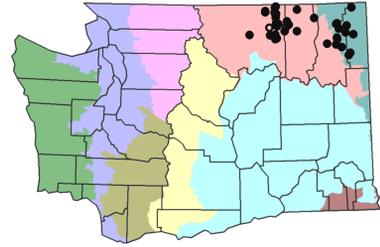
# ***Sisyrinchium septentrionale*** E.P. Bicknell

northern blue-eyed grass

Iridaceae - iris family

status: State Sensitive

rank: G3G4 / S3



**General Description:** Adapted from Flora of North America (1993+) and Henderson (1976): Hairless tufted perennial up to 43 cm tall, not glaucous, rhizomes scarcely discernable. Stems unbranched, 2-winged, 0.8-2 mm wide. Leaves flattened, overlapping, sheathing at the base, generally shorter and narrower than the stem, less than 2 mm wide, sharply pointed.

**Floral Characteristics:** Inflorescence solitary and terminal. Sheathing bracts 2, unequal in length, green. Outer bract 20-63 mm, 17-42 mm longer than the inner bract, tapering evenly towards the tip, basally fused for 1.5-2.5 mm. Inner bract with translucent margins 0.1-0.3 mm wide and a slender pointed tip. Flowers 2-5 on slender, spreading pedicels. Tepals pale blue to light bluish violet, rarely white, bases yellow, narrowly elliptic to oblanceolate, tip with a small awn but without a notch. Outer tepals with a length/width ratio of 3-3.5.

**Fruits:** Capsules beige to light brown, obovoid to spherical, 3-5 mm long. Seeds black, angled, finely pitted. Identifiable May to mid-July.

**Identification Tips:** This species is not in Hitchcock & Cronquist (1973). Distinguishing features are the very slender, prolonged outer bract, pale flower color, and outer tepals without notched tips. *S. montanum* has darker blue to bluish purple flowers, tepals with notched tips, and inner bracts with swollen keels basally. *S. idahoense* has outer bracts only 13-16 mm longer than the inner bracts, and flowers light to deep bluish violet or sometimes purple.

**Range:** WA, northern ID, B.C., Alberta, N.W.T., and Saskatchewan.

**Habitat/Ecology:** Open wet or dry meadows dominated by sedges and grasses; often near perennial streams, lakes, or forested wetlands. Associates include Engelmann spruce (*Picea engelmannii*), ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*), resin birch (*Betula glandulosa*), snowberry (*Symphoricarpos albus*), bluegrass (*Poa pratensis*), clover (*Trifolium repens*), and sedges (*Carex interior*, *C. aurea*, and others). Elevations in WA: 655-1370 m (2150-4500 ft).

**Comments:** This species is rare throughout its range. Threats include livestock grazing, trampling, and competition from exotic plants.

**References:** Flora of North America 1993+, vol. 26; Henderson 1976.



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photo by Kathy Ahlenslager