

**ARIZONA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT  
HERITAGE DATA MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**

**Plant Abstract**

**Element Code:** PMCYP03E50

**Data Sensitivity:** No

**CLASSIFICATION, NOMENCLATURE, DESCRIPTION, RANGE**

**NAME:** *Carex ultra* L. H. Bailey  
**COMMON NAME:** Arizona Giant Sedge, Cochise Sedge  
**SYNONYMS:** *Carex spissa* var. *ultra* (L. H. Bailey) Kuk.  
**FAMILY:** Cyperaceae

**AUTHOR, PLACE OF PUBLICATION:** Bailey, L. H. 1886. Proc. Amer. Acad. Arts 22(1): 83.

**TYPE LOCALITY:** Arizona: Huachuca Mountains.

**TYPE SPECIMEN:** Lemmon 2901, 2902. 1882.

**TAXONOMIC UNIQUENESS:** Approximately 50 species of *Carex* known from Arizona.

**DESCRIPTION:** Has appearance of bulrush but is actually a large sedge with round, stout, erect, culms 1.0-2.0 m (3.3-6.6 ft.) tall, 1.5 cm thick at the base, smooth on the obtuse angles below, densely caespitose from stout rootstocks. Leaves 6-15 to a culm, not septate-nodulose, thick, glaucous, 6-12 conspicuously striate-nerved, strongly rough-serrulate on the margins; lower sheaths rough, scabrous and filamentose ventrally, concave at the mouth, the ligule longer than wide. Staminate spikes 2 to 4, 3.0-12.0 cm (1.2-4.8 in.) long, 4-6 mm wide, the lateral sessile or short-peduncled; pistillate spikes 3 to 6 and 2.5 to 15.0 cm (1.0-5.9 in.) long and 0.6 to 1.2 cm (0.24-0.47 in.) wide, sometimes staminate at the apex; upper spikes sessile and overlapping, lower spikes more or less strongly peduncled and separate, erect, elongate, linear-cylindric, 2.5-15 cm long, 6-12 mm wide, containing very numerous appressed-ascending perigynia. Perigynia (bract enclosing the achene) broadly ovoid, compressed-trigonous, leaf-like, 3.5- 4.5 mm (0.24-0.47 in.) long by 2.0 mm (0.08 in.) wide, little inflated, glabrous, light-brown and red-striolate at maturity, obscurely several-nerved on both surfaces, rounded at the base and apex, abruptly short-beaked with beak 0.3 mm (0.12 in.) long; scales lanceolate, acute to acuminate or tapering into a short rough awn, reddish-brown, the center several-nerved and green or straw-colored, half as wide as the perigynia. Achenes trigonous with blunt angles, elliptica-obovoid, about 2.5 mm long and 1.25 mm wide, silvery-black, minutely pitted, substipitate, abruptly contracted into the slender, straight style.

**AIDS TO IDENTIFICATION:** Largest sedge in southern Arizona, growing up to 2.0 m (6.6 ft.) tall. Spikelets very long for sedge, approximately 5.0-10.2 cm (2.0-4.0 in.) long.

**ILLUSTRATIONS:** USFWS Line Drawings.

**TOTAL RANGE:** Southeast Arizona, extreme southwest New Mexico (Hidalgo County: Indian Springs in Peloncillos) and Mexico (Sonora, Coahila).

**RANGE WITHIN ARIZONA:** Cochise County: Huachuca, Chiricahua, Dragoon and Galiuro Mountains; Graham County: Galiuro Mountains; Pinal County: Aravaipa Canyon; Pima County: Santa Rita Mountains, Rincon Valley; Santa Cruz County: Santa Rita and Atascosa Mountains; Yavapai County: Hieroglyphic and Mazatzal Mountains. Only one patch per mountain range except for the Huachucas which have several patches (Warren 1994).

### **SPECIES BIOLOGY AND POPULATION TRENDS**

**GROWTH FORM:** Herbaceous perennial.

**PHENOLOGY:** Flowering late March through September.

**BIOLOGY:** Populations often small and widely separated. *Carex spissa* has unusual geographical range similar to that of *Lilium parryi* with disjunct populations; *C.s.* var. *ultra* in the mountains of southeast Arizona and *C.s.* var. *spissa* found in coastal southern California and northern Baja California, Mexico.

**HABITAT:** Moist soil near perennially wet springs and streams; undulating rocky-gravelly terrain.

**ELEVATION:** 2,040 - 6,000 feet (610-1800 m).

**EXPOSURE:** Southeast-facing, often shaded.

**SUBSTRATE:** Wet alluvial soil, sand and gravel.

**PLANT COMMUNITY:** Aquatic/riparian woodland; oak-pinyon woodland. Associated species may include: *Juniperus deppeana*, *Platanus wrightii*, *Cupressus*, *Fraxinus*, *Mimulus guttatus*, *M. cardinalis*, *Salix goodingii*, *S. bonplandiana*, *Populus fremonti*, *Juncus*, *Polypogon monspeliensis*, *Eleocharis montevidensis*, *Vitis arizonica*, *Toxicodendron radicans*, *Scutellaria potosina*, *Amsonia grandiflora*, *Fraxinus velutina*, *Asclepias angustifolia*, *Aquilegia chrysantha*, *Baccharis salifolia*, *B. rubens*, *B. marginatus*, *Veronica anagallis-aquatica*, *Quercus emoryi*, *Q. arizonica*, *Q. hypoleucoides*, *Rhamnus californicus*, *Bouvardia glaberrima*, *Lobelia laxiflora*, *Yucca arizonica*, *Cammandra pallida*, *Astragalus arizonicus*, *Cammissonia chamaenerioides*, *Chaenactis carphoclinia*, *Cryptantha angustifolia*, *C. muricata*, *Cynodon dactylon*, *Eriogonum deflexum*, *Erodium cicutarium*, *Galium aparine*, *Juncus balticus*, *Mentzelia multiflora*, *Phalaris minor*, *Prenanthes exigua*, *Prosopis velutina*, *Rorippa nasturtium-aquaticum*, *Spenopholis obtusata*, *Tamarix chinensis*, *Trisetum interruptum*, *Avena fatua*, *Bothriochloa*, *Castilleja linariifolia*.

**POPULATION TRENDS:** Unknown

## **SPECIES PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION**

**ENDANGERED SPECIES ACT STATUS:** None  
**STATE STATUS:** None  
**OTHER STATUS:** Forest Service Sensitive (USDA, FS Region 3 1999)  
Bureau of Land Management Sensitive (USDI, BLM AZ 2005)

**MANAGEMENT FACTORS:** Small populations in isolated wetlands vulnerable to local disturbance of aquatic habitat, therefore, protection of springs required.

**PROTECTIVE MEASURES TAKEN:**

**SUGGESTED PROJECTS:** Revisit known sites to determine population and habitat, then track population condition. Survey potential Bureau of Land Management sites in Galiuro Mountains.

**LAND MANAGEMENT/OWNERSHIP:** DOD - Fort Huachuca Military Reservation; NPS - Chiricahua National Monument; USFS - Coronado And Tonto National Forests; Pima County - Cienega Creek Natural Preserve; TNC - Aravaipa Canyon and Muleshoe Ranch Preserves; Private.

## **SOURCES OF FURTHER INFORMATION**

### **REFERENCES:**

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- Kearney, T.H., R.H. Peebles with collaborators. 1960. Arizona flora. Second edition with supplement by J.T. Howell, E. McClintock and collaborators. University of California Press. Berkeley. p.164.
- USDA, Forest Service Region 3. 1999. Regional Forester's Sensitive Species List.
- USDI, Bureau of Land Management. 2005. BLM Sensitive Species List for Arizona.
- Warren, P.L. 1994. Bureau of Land Management, Safford District, Rare Plant Workshop. November 14-16. Tucson, Arizona.

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**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

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