

Carex pensylvanica

Pennsylvania Sedge




Tried and True

Native Plant Selections

for the Mid-Atlantic

Delicate, arching, semi-evergreen leaves define this native sedge found in much of the Mid-Atlantic Region.\* In dry shade where lawn maintenance is a challenge, this substitute\*\* never needs mowing.



Grass / Sedge	Flowers, Fountaining Habit, En Masse	
Height: ½–1½ feet	 	
Spread: ½–1 foot		
Bloom Color: Green, yellow, reddish purple, white		
Characteristics		
Semi- <a href="#">evergreen</a> , shade-loving, <a href="#">monoecious</a> , <a href="#">perennial sedge</a> with fountaining habit	<div><p>*It is native in DC and common in DE. It is native in most MD and PA counties. In VA, it is common in the mountains and Piedmont and infrequent in the Coastal Plain.</p><p>**If used as a lawn substitute, then plant densely from purchased stock. It can be kept unmown or mowed 2–3 times per year at a height of 2–4 inches.</p></div>	
<a href="#">Alternate</a> , narrow, grass-like, <a href="#">glabrous</a> , medium green leaves on triangular-shaped <a href="#">culms</a> ( <a href="#">stems</a> )		
Terminal, purple, staminate (male) <a href="#">spikelets</a> with yellowish <a href="#">stamens</a> appear above pistillate (female) spikelets with long, white styles from April to July		
<a href="#">Achenes</a> encased in sac-like <a href="#">bracts</a> ( <a href="#">perigynia</a> )		
Foliage turns sandy-tan in fall		
Spreads by <a href="#">rhizomes</a> to form loose colonies to dense mats with a creeping habit		
Attributes		
Tolerates heavy shade and wet <a href="#">soil</a>		
No serious pests or diseases; deer rarely damage		
Often found growing near oak trees resulting in the common name “oak sedge”		
Attracts insects and birds		
Growing and Maintenance Tips	Excellent Replacement for	
<a href="#">Soil Requirements</a> : Average, well-drained	<i>Carex</i> non-native species and cultivars	
<a href="#">Light Requirements</a> : Partial Shade, Shade	<i>Festuca arundinacea</i> - Tall Fescue	
<a href="#">Water Requirements</a> : Dry, Moist	<a href="#">Liriope spicata</a> - Creeping Liriope	
Does not grow well from seed		
Cut to ground early spring to keep tidy appearance		
Use in dry shade as alternative to lawn, ground cover, or underplanting for shade perennials		
<a href="#">Hardiness</a> : USDA Zones 3–8		
developed by Master Gardeners of Northern Virginia, serving Arlington and Alexandria		

Images by Elaine Mills private garden, Arlington, VA and Longwood Gardens