

# Carex grayi

## Gray's Sedge

Tried and True  
Native Plant Selections  
for the Mid-Atlantic

Named after the famous American botanist Asa Gray, this native\* of both wet woods and swamps will also grow well in average garden soil. A highly ornamental sedge, its striking inflorescences bloom for a long period, maturing to brown seed heads that have been compared to the medieval club-like morning star.



Grass	Clump, Inflorescences, Foliage, Mature Fruit
Height: 2–3 feet	
Spread: 1½–2 feet	
Bloom Color: Pale green	
Characteristics	 
Clump-forming, <a href="#">semi-evergreen</a> , herbaceous <a href="#">perennial</a>	
Upright, <a href="#">alternate</a> , parallel- <a href="#">veined</a> , ½” wide by 14” long, <a href="#">glabrous</a> , lime green, basal leaves	
Leafy <a href="#">culm</a> topped with a single <a href="#">staminate spike</a> above 1-2 globular <a href="#">pistillate</a> spikes, consisting of 10-25 inflated and tapering <a href="#">perigynia</a> , May–July	
Perigynia mature to brown in fall as <a href="#">achenes</a> form	
Self-seeds—inflated perigynia float on water for distribution; <a href="#">cespitose</a> ** (grows in dense tufts)	
Attributes	
Tolerates occasional flooding, erosion; no serious pests or diseases; <a href="#">deer</a> rarely severely damage	
Fall and winter interest of dried seed heads	
Attractive in fresh-cut or dried floral arrangements	
Attracts birds and mammals to seeds; provides cover for wildlife; <a href="#">larval</a> host for some moths	
Growing and Maintenance Tips	Excellent Replacement for
<a href="#">Soil Requirements</a> : Nutrient-rich	<i>Carex morrowii</i> – Japanese Sedge
<a href="#">Light Requirements</a> : Sun, Partial Shade	<i>Carex oshimensis</i> – Oshima Sedge
<a href="#">Water Requirements</a> : Moist, wet	<i>Carex pendula</i> – Drooping Sedge
Maintain moisture when planted in sun	<i>Carex spicata</i> – Spiked Sedge
Plant may not reach full height in hot climates	<p>*It is <a href="#">native</a> to DC. It is not reported in DE. In MD, it occurs mostly in the Piedmont. It is present throughout PA, with rare populations in the northeast. In VA, it is frequent and locally common in the inner Coastal Plain and outer Piedmont and rare elsewhere.</p> <p>**<i>Flora of Virginia</i> describes it as “cespitose, rhizomes lacking.” <i>Flora of North America</i> describes it as “cespitose or not, short-rhizomatous.”</p>
Use as accent plant in containers and borders or plant en masse along streams and in rain gardens	
<a href="#">Hardiness</a> : USDA Zones 4a–9b	
developed by Master Gardeners of Northern Virginia, serving Arlington and Alexandria	

Images by Elaine Mills, private garden, Arlington, VA, and Mary Free (bottom), Glencarlyn Garden