

# Bermuda Sedge

*Carex bermudiana*

Bermuda Protected Species



GOVERNMENT OF BERMUDA  
Department of Environment & Natural Resources



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## Current Status

**Endemic**

**BPSA:** Level 3

**CITES:** No

**Bda Red List:** CR

**CMS:** No

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## Ecology

### Identification

Sedges are closely related to grasses and look very much like them. They grow as individual plants with long thin leaves. The edges of the leaves can be very sharp. The leaves of Bermuda Sedge grow to 45 – 75 cm (1.5 to 2.5 feet) long and can reach 5 cm (2 inches) wide, but are usually narrower. The leaves have a triangular-shaped depression in the middle of them, which can be useful in telling Sedge apart from grasses.

### Range

Unique to Bermuda.

### Habitat

Bermuda Sedge would have grown on the floor of the original Bermudian forest, beneath a canopy of Bermuda Cedar and Palmetto. Bermuda Sedge can grow in very wet conditions like in freshwater marshes or in forest settings. The decomposing leaves and low light on the forest floor provide ideal nutrient-rich, moist growing conditions. Bermuda Sedge became rare due to clearing of forest habitats and competition from invasive plants. It can still be found in isolated places at Paget Marsh, and is now being planted in restored forests.

### Reproduction and Life Cycle

Bermuda Sedge flowers in spring. Sedge only has a few flowers and these look like greyish brown fuzzy spikes. The flower spikes are 2.5-5 cm (1-2 inches) long followed by a seed head. Rats love to eat the seed heads of Bermuda Sedge which limits this plants

ability to reproduced on mainland Bermuda. On Nonsuch Island, which is rat-free, Bermuda Sedge self-seeds and is growing well.

## Why protect this species?

Bermuda Sedge is endemic to Bermuda. Today it is rarely seen and as such is listed due to its significant decline. The Bermuda Sedge population was likely seriously impacted by the draining of the freshwater marshes for mosquito control in the 19th century. Today the populations and their habitats have been fragmented by development. Some of the remaining large populations are not within protected areas, making them vulnerable to destruction. The habitat of the remaining wild Sedges has declined in quality over the last 50 years. As Bermuda's forests have become dominated by invasive species, the forest canopy has become dense, allowing less light to reach the understory where Sedges used to grow.

Threats faced by this species include:

- Habitat loss and fragmentation
- Development on woodlands and wetlands
- Competition from invasive plants
- Lack of awareness leading to accidental destruction
- Rats seriously impact reproduction and sustainability of populations

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## What is being done to conserve it?

**Protected Species Act Listing:** Level 3, 2012

**IUCN Red List:** Endangered [ C2a(i) ; D ] version 3.1.

**Recovery Plan:** Bermuda Sedge is included in the 2009 Recovery Plan for eight species of flowering plants.

**Research:** Distribution mapping and population assessment for this species has been undertaken in support of IUCN Red Listing (Copeland et al. 2014) and genetic barcoding is also underway.

**Propagation:** Bermuda Sedge is being propagated from seed for sale to the public and planting of this species for ornamental use, as well as part of woodland restoration projects, is being promoted.

## Protective legislation

Protected Species Act (2003)

## What you can do?

**Plant:** Purchase this endemic plant for your home garden or woodland restoration project.

**Learn:** Understand how destruction of habitat leads to loss of endangered and threatened species and Bermuda's plant and animal diversity. Tell others what you have learned.

**Join a conservation group:** such as the Bermuda National Trust or the Bermuda Audubon Society to protect habitats.

**Control invasive plant species:** Invasive plants should be managed in places where specimens of this plant occur so that they do not become overwhelmed by other vegetation. Controlling invasives on your property will stop them spreading to nature reserves.

## Information sources

To learn more please visit: [www.environment.bm](http://www.environment.bm)

Copeland, A., Malcolm, P. & Bárrios, S. 2014. *Carex bermudiana*. The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species 2014: <http://dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2014-3.RLTS.T56961131A56961134.en>.

Britton, N.L. 1918. Flora of Bermuda. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York.

Sarkis, S. 2009. Recovery Plan for eight species of flowering plants, *Carex bermudiana*, *Peperomia septentrionalis*, *Phaseolus lignosus*, *Erigeron darrellianus*, *Galium bermudense*, *Chiococca alba*, *Hypericum hypericoides*, *Psychotria ligustrifolia*, in Bermuda. Dept. of Conservation Services, Government of Bermuda pp.28.



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## For Further Information

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[www.environment.bm](http://www.environment.bm)

Disclaimer: The information contained in this publication is based on the knowledge and understanding at the time of writing.