

Woolly Sedge *Carex pellita*

Cyperaceae—Sedge family

by Tom Reaume © 2010 Nature Manitoba

Grant:



A colonial, variable **perennial sedge** 15–90 cm tall with scaly **rhizomes** 6–25 cm long by 2–3 mm thick; in sandy pond margins, marshes, ditches, wet meadows and along river-banks, and other disturbed calcareous sites.

● **FLOWERS** Green and brown, blooming April–June; **inflorescence** a unisexual (usually) spike, total length from bottom spike to top spike 13 (7–25) cm; **male spikes** terminal 1–3, often sessile and imbricate, each 1–4 cm long by 2–4 mm wide, the apical one the longest, ascending; **subtending bract** of lowest male spike 10 (4–36) mm long, reduced above, filliform, ascending, awnlike at tips, each usually not longer than its spike, the base wide with hyaline margins; **peduncles** from bottom of top female spike to base of lowest male spike is 4.6 (1.3–9) cm long and scabrous; **male scales** 4–6.1 mm long by c. 1.4 mm wide, widest above middle; **female spikes** 1–3, lateral, remote, the lowest two 5.1 (2.3–8.6) cm apart, ascending, often sessile, each 30- to 60-flowered, 1.9 (0.8–3.1) cm long by 5–7 mm wide, the lowest spike 24 (18–32) cm above the top stem leaf's collar; **subtending bracts** 15 (1–30) cm long by 1.7–3 mm wide, reduced above, scabrous along margins, ascending to descending, lowest one may extend past the top male spike; **peduncles** 0–10 mm long; **stigmas** 3; **perigynia** round, 6-ranked, ascending, each 2.5–5.2 mm long by 1.2–2.8 mm wide by 1.7–2 mm thick, brownish when ripe, walls thin, 15- to 20-nerved, these visible near base, obscured by hairs above; **beak** slightly hairy, 0.5–1.6 mm long, bidentate, teeth 0.3–0.8 mm long, ascending; **female scales** 2.5–5.3 mm long by 0.8–1.6 mm wide, sometimes ciliate, usually shorter and narrower than the perigynia, tip tapered to awnlike, midvein tan, persistent after perigynia fall; **flower to fruit** 6–8 weeks.

● **FRUIT** an achene, May–September, one per perigynium, 1-seeded, bluntly triangular, 1.5–2.1 mm long by 1.2–1.6 mm wide, walls c. 0.1 mm thick, sides concave below to convex above, filling most of the perigynium; **style** with a little bend at its base, c. 1 mm long.

● **LEAVES** erect to ascending, 3–7 per culm; **blades** 10–50 cm long by 2–6 mm wide, flat to slightly V-shaped, midrib obvious, sharply keeled below (dorsally), margins often revolute, glabrous to scabrous, sometimes extending past the top male spike, wilted tan blades around the base of new spring growth; **sheaths** closed, glabrous, apices concave with a purple or rusty line or blotch, laddering early, reddish at the base, persistent; **ligules** unremarkable, 2–10 mm long; **vegetative plants** 65–100 cm tall, with continuous growth over the summer; **blades** strongly V-shaped, the 5 or 6 leaves 3–4 mm wide (flattened) with arched apices.

● **STEM** a culm, erect to leaning, sharply triangular and scabrous above, 1.4–3 mm wide across a side at mid-height; **bases** brown to reddish, 3–4 mm wide, bluntly triangular.

● **RANGE: (CAN)** 9 provinces; **(USA)** 40 states, absent in the southeast; a **native**.



Woolly Sedge occupies mainly the watery center of this shallow ditch in Winnipeg, Manitoba



A tangle of plants with brown **Male** spikes and yellowish green **Female** spikes



3 male spikes 5 cm long



Female spike 2 cm long

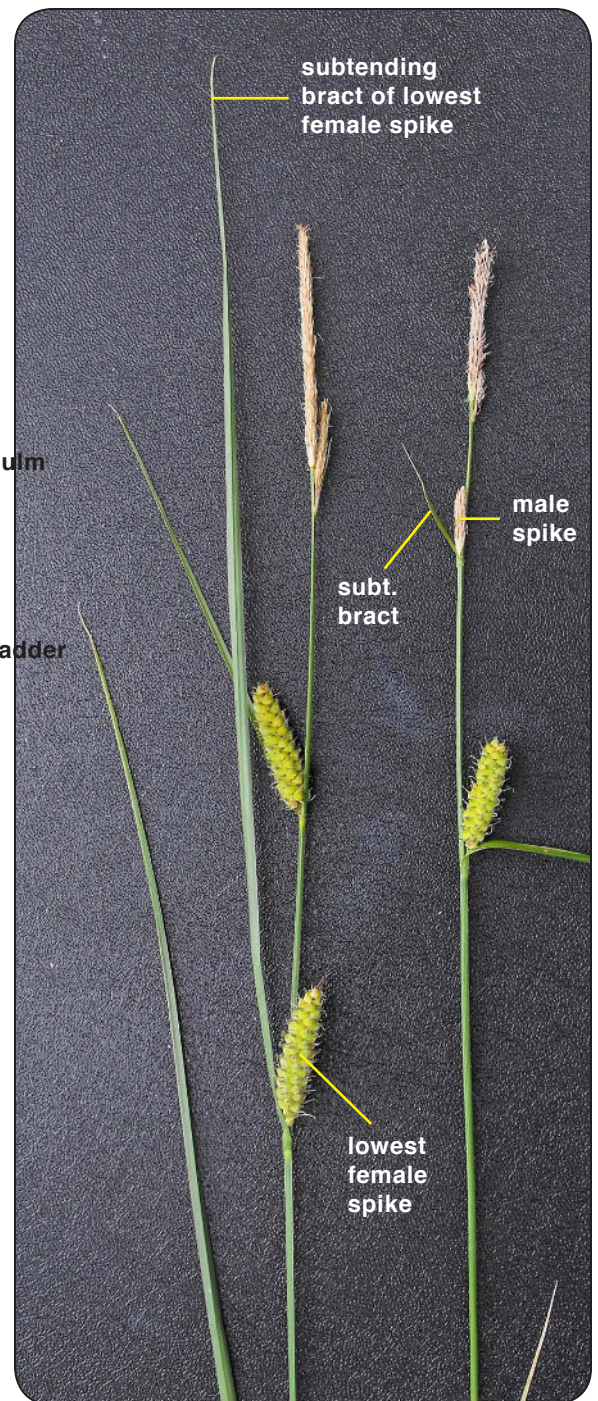
Both spikes
several
days after
blooming



leaf blade

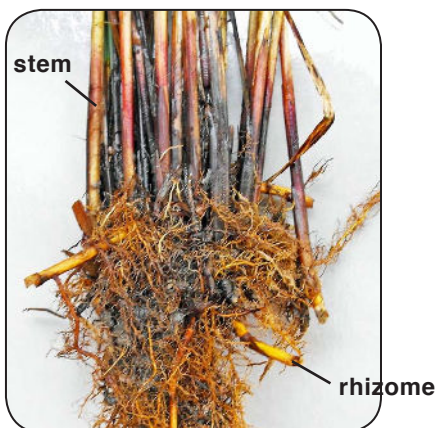


Laddering by the partial disintegration of a lower leaf sheath



Plant 23 cm tall about a week after flowering in May

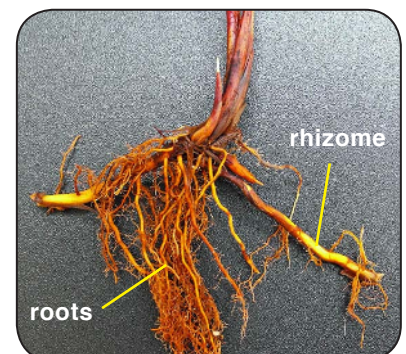
Variation in spike arrangement on two plants



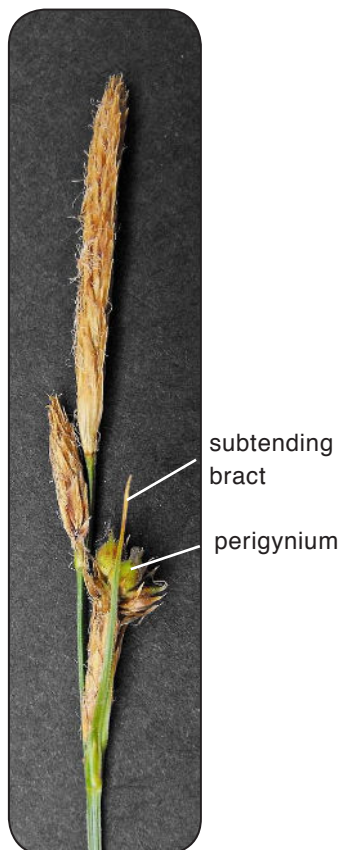
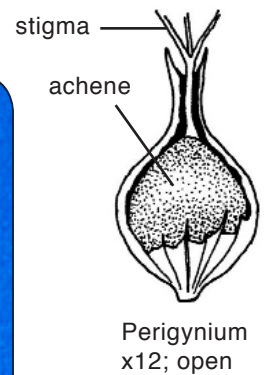
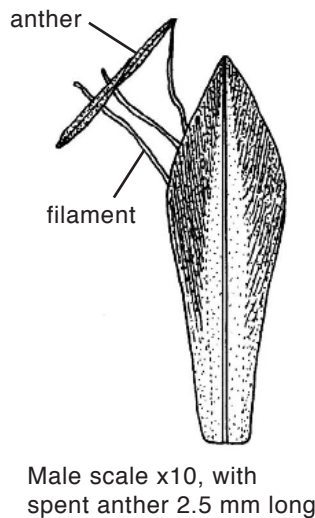
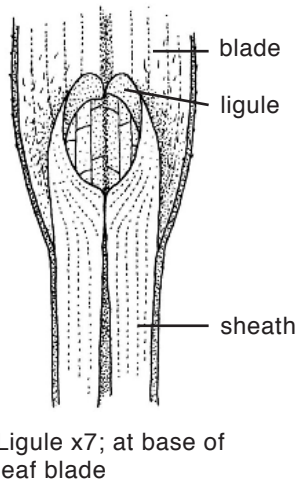
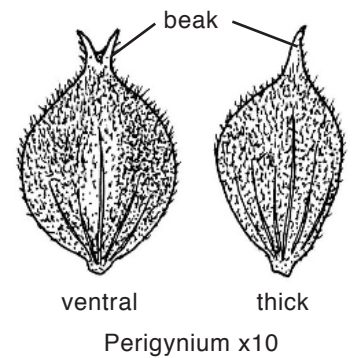
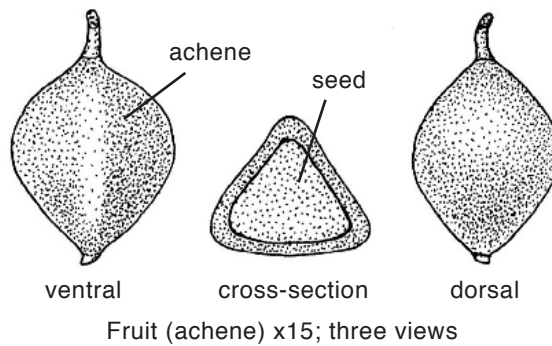
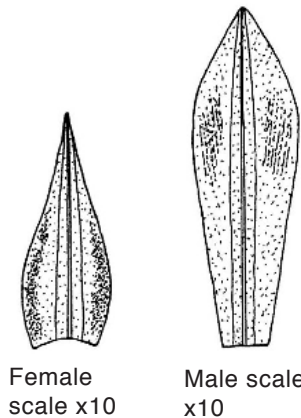
A cluster of stem bases with a tangle of roots and rhizomes



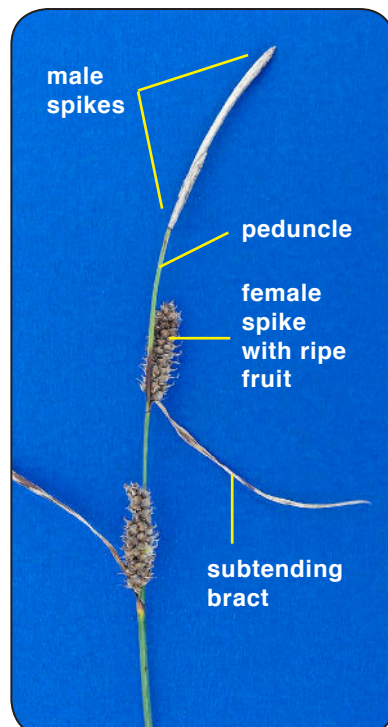
Bases of Woolly Sedge in ditch



Roots and rhizomes of one plant

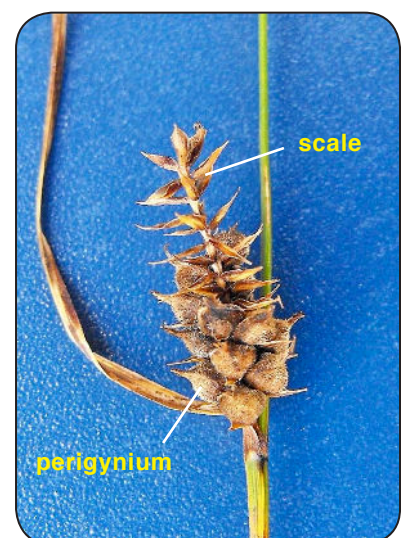


Three male spikes; the lowest one with a few apical perigynia



Upper part of Woolly Sedge with ripe fruit in July

Female spike 2 cm long with ripe perigynia



Female spike 13 mm long; perigynia fall leaving the scales