CYPRESSKNEE SEDGE
Carex decomposita Muhl.
Synonyms: none
Family: Cyperaceae (sedge)
FNAI Ranks: G3G4/S2S3
Legal Status: US-none FL-none
Wetland Status: US-OBL+ FL-OBL


John Gwaltney

Field Description: Large clump-forming sedge up to 1 m tall. Leaves 5 - 8 mm wide with the ventral portion of the sheath whitish-papery. Spikes of the inflorescence relatively short, less than 3 times as long as broad, with lateral spikes sessile, some with the female flowers below the male flowers. Achenes enclosed by a usually inflated perigynium (sac) through which only the stigmas or style protrudes. Perigynium 2 - 2.5 mm long, ascending and dark brown at maturity, not thickened and corky near the base. Achene lenticular with 2 stigmas.

Similar Species: *Carex* species are all characterized by the inflated perigynium enclosing the achene. *Carex decomposita* may be distinguished from other *Carex* species by its habitat and specific vegetative and reproductive characteristics.

Related Rare Species: *Carex microdonta* is state-listed endangered. *Carex baltzellii* and *C. chapmannii* are both state-listed threatened. *Carex tenax* is not considered

state threatened, but is tracked by FNAI.

Habitat: Swamps and lake margins where the water does not fluctuate.

Best Survey Season: Late spring to summer.

Range-wide Distribution: Found throughout the southeast and in New York, in the midwest through Michigan, Illinois, and Missouri, southwest to Texas.

Conservation Status: Primarily a southern species, once ranging from New York to Michigan southward to northern Florida and eastern Texas. The range of this species seems to have retreated within the last century, particularly in the north and east. The most northerly extant site occurs in southern Ohio; possibly extirpated in New York, Maryland, and Michigan.

Protection and Management: Main threats include destruction and draining of wetlands for agriculture and development, dredging of streams and rivers, conversion of natural ponds to retention ponds through deepening and removal of native vegetation, logging of habitat that requires dredging and clearing, and subjection to herbicide from nearby agricultural fields. To manage this species natural upland cover and wetlands within the watersheds should be restored and/or protected.

References: Godfrey and Wooten 1979, Crispin and Penskar 1990