

CAREX PURPURIFERA Mackenzie
Purple Wood Sedge

FAMILY: Cyperaceae

HABIT: Tufted perennial from a short rootstalk; sterile culms to 4 dm. high, fertile culms to 5.5 dm. high; fruiting early to mid-May.

SIMILAR SPECIES: Similar to other Ohio carices with purple leaf sheaths, particularly *Carex careyana*. Purple wood sedge is distinguished by its tall, slender fertile culms with loosely-flowered spikes.

TOTAL RANGE: KY and w. VA, to n. GA and n. AL.

STATE RANGE (as of 2008): There are post-1980 records from Adams and Scioto counties.

HABITAT: Dry to mesic woods on slopes, especially on limestone escarpments, mesic terraces of small streams; full or partial shade.

HAZARDS: Unknown, possibly clearing of woody vegetation and subsequent drying of habitat.

RECOVERY POTENTIAL: Unknown, but possibly good.

INVENTORY GUIDELINES: Collect complete specimens with both sterile and fertile culms. Count number of clumps or tufts.

COMMENTS: This sedge is rather conspicuous compared to other woodland sedges. It reaches its northern limit in southern Ohio. The species is relatively easy to identify when in fruit; however, sterile material can be overlooked. Its seeming rarity may in part be a function of its early fruiting period. The fruits are ephemeral and may be missed if the habitat is not surveyed at an appropriate time of year. Though purple wood sedge should be sought elsewhere in southern Ohio, it likely is restricted to a limited geographic area.

SELECTED REFERENCES:

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Manhart, J.R. 1986. Cytology of *Carex purpurifera* Mack. (Cyperaceae). *Rhodora* 88: 141-147.



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