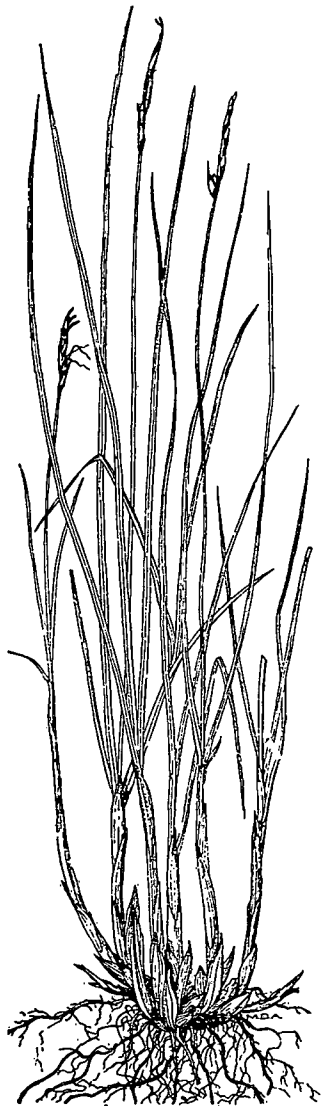


Elk Sedge

(Carex geyeri)



(Calamagrostis rubescens). Elk sedge is by far the most common sedge in the ponderosa pine and dry Douglas fir sites.

Description:

Length of Life--Perennial.

Height--6 to 20 inches.

How does it spread?--By seeds and underground rootstocks.

Seed head--Short, narrow and few flowered.

Where does it grow? Elk sedge grows chiefly in the ponderosa pine areas of the Pacific Northwest. Aside from timbered areas, it also grows well on exposed hillsides, burns, and open grasslands. It likes well-drained sandy or gravelly soils. It has an elevation range of 1000-10,000 feet depending on the latitude. It is also found on similar sites in Utah, Montana, and Colorado.

Is it important? Yes, it is one of the earliest forage plants available on the lower elevation ranges. The forage value for cattle and sheep is rated high in the Pacific Northwest and fair in Montana, Colorado, and Utah. In all areas it is very valuable as a big game forage and as a soil stabilizer.

What does it look like? It is very characteristic of the sedge (Cyperaceae) family. It has a triangular shaped stem with leaves branching off on all three sides (three-ranked). It is very dark green and grows in patches. The seed heads are short and narrow.

What are the associated species? Elk sedge is most commonly found growing with ponderosa pine (Pinus ponderosa), lodgepole pine (Pinus contorta), Douglas fir (Pseudotsuga menziesii), and pinegrass

Stem--Triangular shaped and pithy.

Leaves--Three-ranked (branching from each side of the stem), erect,
thick and rough on the edges.

Roots--Fibrous.

Does it look like anything else? Elk sedge is often mistaken by the casual observer for pinegrass. The easiest method to distinguish between the two is by examining the stems. Elk sedge stems are triangular while those of pinegrass are round. If there is still doubt, the leaves should be examined. Elk sedge leaves are three-ranked, erect, thick, and rough on the edges. Pinegrass leaves are rough on both sides and gracefully drooping with a ring of stiff hairs where the leaf blade branches from the stem.