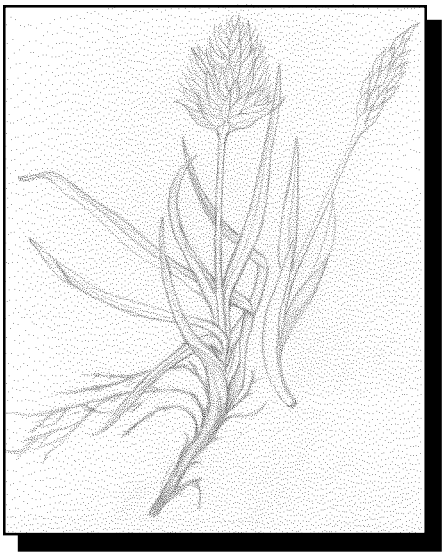
Invasive Alien Plant Species of Virginia

Asiatic Sand Sedge (*Carex kobomugi*) Ohwi

Description

Asiatic sand sedge is a perennial sedge which grows to about a foot in height. The stem is triangular, and the base of the stem is covered with brown scales. Young leaves are yellow-green in color and stiff with a rough texture along their edges. Older, basal leaves are somewhat wider, darker green in color and leathery to the touch. The leaves are often taller than the flowering heads of the plant. Flowering heads are either male or female, and are crowded into dense clusters at the tops of the stems. Female flower clusters are longer and more slender than the more cylindrical male flower clusters. The fruits are triangular nutlets known as achenes and are enclosed in a papery sac surrounded below by scales and bracts. Asiatic sand sedge spreads rapidly by underground stems.



Asiatic Sand Sedge *(Carex kobomugi)*

Distribution

Asiatic sand sedge is an east Asian native which was introduced into coastal sands from New Jersey to Virginia in the 1930's for erosion control and as a sand stabilizer. The plant is typically found on coastal dunes and berms, although it is also occasionally found in dry, sandy inland areas. In Virginia, it was introduced into the Sandbridge area and has recently been documented in Accomack County and the cities of Virginia Beach and Chesapeake. Its tolerance for salt spray and high winds allows it to survive in dune habitats occupied by unique native vegetation.

Threats

The stems of Asiatic sand sedge form low, dense mats in dunes which crowd out native dune species such as American beach grass, coastal spurge, sea oats, and sea-coast marsh elder. Once established, Asiatic sand sedge dramatically changes the profile of a dune. Tall, native plants such as sea oats buffer the dune from the strong forces of wind and salt spray. When native plants are crowded out by the low-growing Asiatic sand sedge, the dunes are vulnerable to shifting sands and blowouts.

Control

Early detection of this invasive plant is important for successful control, as small populations are easier to manage than larger ones. Removal by pulling or digging out the plants is recommended only for very small infestations. Large patches of this invasive are best controlled by the application of a biodegradable glyphosphate herbicide to individual plants. Herbicide application is best accomplished at the end of the growing season when plants are actively transporting nutrients from stems and leaves to root systems. Glyphosphate herbicides affect all green vegetation and should be used sparingly so as not to contact desirable species which may be growing with the Asiatic sand sedge. As with hand pulling control methods, follow-up treatments may be needed in subsequent years to remove plants that have sprouted from remaining seeds.

Reference

Fernald, M. L. 1950. Gray's Manual of Botany, eighth edition. American Book Company, New York. 1632 pp.

For more information, contact the Department of Conservation and Recreation, or the Virginia Native Plant Society.

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