

## **Wetland Plant Identification Workshop**

### **Highlands Biological Station**

**Dates: June 8 – 12, 2026**

#### **Instructor**

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#### **Course Description**

Sedges represent one of the most challenging groups of vascular plants to identify. Species often grow side-by-side in the same microhabitats, their floral structures are reduced and morphologically unique, key differences may require precise measurements, and mature specimens are frequently essential for accurate determination. As a result, many botanists and students struggle to gain confidence with this group.

This workshop focuses on two major goals:

1. Building fluency in sedge terminology and successfully applying that terminology when using dichotomous keys.
2. Developing an understanding of the taxonomic structure of *Carex*, including how to distinguish among major sections of the genus and how to separate *Carex* from other spring-flowering sedges.

Students will work with herbarium specimens, freshly collected field material, and additional specimens brought by the instructor. Over the course of the week, the class will assemble an in-room reference collection organized by genus and *Carex* section. The aim is to sharpen identification skills and build confidence with this large and complex group. For most students, emphasis will be at the “*Carex* Section X” level, with species-level work available for those who wish to pursue it.

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## Learning Objectives

By the end of the workshop, students will be able to:

- Apply sedge terminology accurately to field and lab specimens.
- Interpret dichotomous keys effectively and understand how terminology shapes key couplets.
- Recognize and differentiate major *Carex* sections and common spring-flowering sedge genera.
- Identify (to section or species level) many of the sedges encountered during the course.

Participants will likely see 50–100 species of sedges and related taxa. More advanced students may focus on difficult groups or species-level distinctions.

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## Prerequisites

This workshop is intended for:

- Professional biologists
- Naturalists
- Undergraduate or graduate students

Some familiarity with plant taxonomy or dichotomous keys is useful but not required. Students of all ability levels will be supported, and the instructor may divide the class into informal groups to better match experience levels.

Some field days may involve long (up to 12-hour) sessions, and participants should be prepared accordingly.

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## Lecture & Lab Schedule

The class meets daily at 8:30 a.m. in the laboratory unless otherwise noted.

- Day 1:
  - Introductory terminology lecture
  - Short local field trip to begin applying terminology

- Days 2–3:
  - Field trips to collect local material
  - Lab time dedicated to keying and character interpretation
- Day 4:
  - Full-day field trip to observe sedges across a variety of habitats
  - Begin associating species and groups with habitat information
- Day 5:
  - Continued lab and field work
  - Focus on unstudied collected material or deeper exploration of difficult taxa

Most days conclude around 4:00 p.m., with optional evening lab time offered around 6:00 p.m. for additional study.

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### **Evaluation (for students taking the course for credit)**

- Herbarium collection
- Pre-class or field quizzes
- Take-home final examination

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### **Required Text & Tools**

- Second Edition of the *Guide to the Vascular Plants of Tennessee*
  - Expected release: Fall 2025
  - Printed manuscript copies (approx. \$40) will be organized for Summer 2026
- 10× or 14× hand lens
- GPS/location-recording capability (via phone app or image metadata; guidance provided)

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### **Equipment Provided by HBS**

- Dissecting microscopes
- Hand lenses (if needed)
- Teasing needles
- Fine-point forceps
- Plant presses and drying cabinet