SYLLABUS · SUMMER 2027 · HIGHLANDS BIOLOGICAL STATION

Sedge Identification

A workshop

WHEN	WHERE	INSTRUCTOR
June 7–11, 2027 Monday to Friday	Highlands Biological Station Highlands, North Carolina	Dr. Joey Shaw University of Tennessee at Chattanooga · joey-shaw@utc.edu

About the *workshop*

Sedges are notoriously difficult to identify because there are many species, several different species often grow in proximity in the same microhabitats, they have reduced and unique floral structures and terminology, important differences used to separate taxa may be small scale measurements, and mature material is often necessary for successfully keying species. For these reasons, students of botany often struggle to learn these plants.

The two primary foci of this course are to: (1) learn terminology and how to successfully apply and interpret it in keys and (2) learn characteristics of separating the numerous taxonomic sections of the largest genus, *Carex*, as well as separating *Carex* from other spring-flowering sedges. We will look at herbarium material, specimens we collect, and plant material I bring to class to build an in-class collection spread throughout the room of specimens segregated by genus and section of *Carex*.

This workshop is intended to sharpen skills and student confidence in this large, complicated group of plants. For most students, our focus will be mostly at the level of "*Carex* Section X" rather than in species delimitation (unless that is what you wish to pursue!).

OBJECTIVES

By the end of the course and at a minimum you will have developed the skills to successfully apply terminology to plant material in the field so that you are more likely to be successful in correct sedge species identification. Students will likely see 50–100 species of sedges and relatives. If you already have some knowledge and skills, we will continue to develop your ability by focusing on more difficult taxa.

PREREQUISITES

This course is designed for professional biologists, naturalists, and undergraduate/graduate students who have an interest in sedges, plant taxonomy, or field botany and who have some experience with dichotomous keys. However, no previous experience with sedges is required and we will often split the class into a few informal groups based on ability and knowledge level. If you have experience, I can probably take you further in your knowledge. Depending on the different field trips, participants should be prepared to put in at least a couple of 12-hour days.

How the days *run*

We will meet in the lab each morning at 8:30 a.m. (unless otherwise stated). The first day will be lecture heavy, but after that we will focus more on lab and field trip time. Most days we will be in class (lecture or lab) until about 4 p.m., and then I will offer an opportunity for additional study after dinner at about 6 p.m. for those who want more time with plant material.

TENTATIVE TIMELINE

MONDAY Day 1	Usually a large lecture day on terminology, with a short, local field trip to start to apply terminology.
TUESDAY Day 2	A short(er) field trip to collect local material to bring back to the lab; we begin using the keys.
WEDNESDAY Day 3	Same as Day 2.
THURSDAY Day 4	A large, all-day field trip to begin to see our study organisms in a variety of different habitats and begin to assemble habitat information onto some species and groups.
FRIDAY Day 5	Like Days 2 and 3, or used to work through collected material not studied yet.

Evaluation, tools and *texts*

EVALUATION

Students taking the course for credit will be asked to make a herbarium collection, will take pre-class or field quizzes, and will be given a take-home test at the end of the course.

REQUIRED TEXT

A copy of the Second Edition of the *Guide to the Vascular Plants of Tennessee* is required.

ALSO USEFUL

You will also benefit by having a 10× or 14× hand lens and an app for recording location (or at the very least the ability to get metadata from pictures on your phone—I can show you how to do this).

EQUIPMENT PROVIDED BY HBS

- Dissecting scopes
- Hand lenses (if you do not have your own)
- Teasing needles
- Fine point forceps
- Plant presses
- A drying cabinet

Highlands Biological Station · 265 N. Sixth Street, Highlands, NC 28741 Schedule subject to change with weather and conditions.