

Eriophorum virginicum



tawny cottongrass

Family	Cyperaceae		
Origin	Native		
WIS Code	OBL	CoC	9

DESCRIPTION

Perennial sedge in colonies with solitary erect stems or a few clumping (40 cm to 1.2 m tall), light to medium green, unbranched, smooth and weakly three-angled to round. The few leaves per stem (to 70 cm long, 4 mm wide) are alternate, often flopping or bending, flat near the base, triangular toward the tip and rough margined with fine teeth. Sheaths are green, firm, often concave along upper edge and are slightly loose around the stem.



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FLOWERS AND FRUITS

June through September. The compact flower heads contain two to 10 flower spike clusters at the tip of the flowering stems. Each flower is surrounded by white thread-like bristles, creating a cotton-like tuft. Just below the lower flower spikes are leafy bracts, erect to downward pointing. Each flower has a single, egg-shaped, three-veined scale. The fruit (2.5 to 4 mm long) is a capsule (achene) brown to black, elliptic, widest at the middle, and with a short beak at the tip.

HABITAT

Bogs, fens and peaty meadows.

SIMILAR SPECIES

Rhynchospora alba, white beaksedge, looks similar in flower, but lacks the long leaf-like bracts and is not as “fluffy” in appearance of the flower head.



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Eriophorum virginicum, bristles and flower



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Rhynchospora alba