

# Rhynchospora alba



## white beaksedge

Family Cyperaceae

Origin Native

WIS Code OBL CoC 8

### DESCRIPTION

This dense clumping sedge has slender, erect, unbranched stems (10 to 80 cm tall). Leaves are as long or shorter than the flowering stem, and they are narrow, alternate, erect to bending, hairless and flat at the base to three-sided toward the tip. Sheaths are closed.



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### FLOWERS AND FRUITS

June through August. At the tip of the flowering stem, spikelets are in one to three tuft-like clusters (1 to 2.5 cm across) with one or two smaller clusters also on the upper stem. Clusters are stalked and have leaf-like bracts, as long or slightly longer than the cluster. Spikelets (3.5 to 5.5 mm long) are narrow, elliptic, with pointed tip and two or three flowers. Scales at the base of the flowers are lance-shaped, pointed, overlapping and white then turning brown with age.

Fruits are seed containing achenes (1.5 to 2 mm long), with a flat oval body, widest in the middle, and narrow triangular base. Surrounding the achene are nine to 12 barbed bristles as long as or slightly longer than the achene.

### HABITAT

Prefers acid soils in mountain bogs, fens, swamps, and beaver ponds.

### SIMILAR SPECIES

*Eriophorum virginicum*, tawny cottongrass, looks similar in flower, but has much longer leaf-like bracts, and very long thread-like bristles giving the flower heads a cotton-ball, fluffy appearance. See *Eriophorum virginicum* page for more details.



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*Rhynchospora alba*, flowers and bristles on achene



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*Eriophorum virginicum*, flowers and fruiting head