

Tallgrass Prairie Sedges and Rushes

Sedges and rushes, while more grass-like than tree-like, are often found where trees are found, in areas where water is more plentiful and soils are deeper. The phrase “sedges have edges and rushes are round” helps to differentiate these plant types from grasses, which have jointed stems. Sedges and rushes provide food for a host of wetland and woodland wildlife, such as ducks, beaver, and deer, as well as for livestock.



Emory Sedge - 16 - 44 in.
Carex emoryi
Flowers in: April - May



Fescue Sedge - 12 - 36 in.
Carex brevior
Flowers in: April - May



Mead's Sedge - 8 - 20 in.
Carex meadii
Flowers in: April - May



Fox Sedge - 12 - 36 in.
Carex vulpinoidea
Flowers in: April - June



Heavy Sedge - 12 - 24 in.
Carex gravida
Flowers in: April - June



Woodland Sedge - 4 - 24 in.
Juncus blanda
Flowers in: April - June



Long-stem Spike-rush - up to 48 in.
Eleocharis palustris
Flowers in: April - July



Davis Sedge - 12 - 36 in.
Carex davisii
Flowers in: May - July



Inland Rush - 8 - 34 in.
Juncus interior
Flowers in: May - August



Torrey's Rush - 8 - 32 in.
Juncus torreyi
Flowers in: July - August



Bottle-brush Sedge - 8 - 40 in.
Carex hystericina
Flowers in: May - June



Soft-stem Bulrush - 36 - 120 in.
Schoenoplectus tabernaemontani
Matures: May - July



Flat-stem Spike-sedge - 4 - 12 in.
Eleocharis compressa
Flowers in: June - August



Yellow Nutsedge - 6 - 30 in.
Cyperus esculentus
Flowers in: July - August

Useful books and websites

Great Plains Flora Association. T.M. Barkley, editor. *Flora of the Great Plains*. University Press of Kansas, 1986.
Haddock, Michael John. *Wildflowers and Grasses of Kansas: A Field Guide*. University Press of Kansas, 2005.
Stephens, H.A., *Trees, Shrubs, and Woody Vines in Kansas*. University Press of Kansas, 1969.
Kansas Native Plants Society:
www.kansasnativeplantsociety.org
Kansas Wildflowers and Grasses: www.kswildflower.org
United States Department of Agriculture PLANTS database: www.plants.usda.gov

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For More Information

Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve is a public/private partnership between the National Park Service (the primary land manager) and The Nature Conservancy (the primary land owner). The preserve offers a variety of activities, including ranch house tours, hiking trails, prairie bus tours, and more. The historic Spring Hill Ranch house and barn are open daily 9:00 am to 4:30 p.m., except Thanksgiving Day, December 25, and January 1. All hiking trails and all outdoor areas are open 24 hours. No camping is permitted. To learn more, please contact the preserve at:

Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve
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Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve
Strong City, Kansas

Common Trees, Vines, Sedges, and Rushes Found at Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve



View of trees and old stone fence on Southwind Nature Trail



View of treeline along Fox Creek on Bottomland Nature Trail

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Islands on a sea of grass

When one thinks of prairie, trees and wetlands don't often come to mind. However, these areas form an important part of the tallgrass prairie ecosystem, providing both food and shelter for a wide range of tallgrass prairie animal life who would have few living options if these areas were unavailable. These rare and isolated islands on



an endless sea of tallgrass offer welcome shelter to dozens of migrating and resident bird species, as well as for many of the tallgrass prairie's larger mammals, such as white-tailed deer, skunk, bobcat, and raccoon.

A row of trees often indicates the presence of water flowing from a stream or spring, which provides many of the tallgrass prairie's amphibian, fish, and freshwater mussel populations the habitat they need to survive, making the protection of these fragile areas all the more significant.



Twenty-two tree and vine species and fourteen sedge and rush species are illustrated in this brochure, along with their average heights and flowering times, arranged alphabetically from earliest to latest.

Tallgrass Prairie Trees and Vines

Trees, vines, and other woody plant species thrive on the tallgrass prairie in the deeper soils, more consistent moisture, and protection from fire found most readily in low areas along streams and rivers and around springs and seeps. Not only does the forest of trees provide food and shelter for wildlife in its canopy of branches and leaves, the forest floor itself teems with wildlife, who depend upon what falls from above and decomposes on the ground below for their survival.



American Elm - 40 - 98 ft.
Ulmus americana
Flowers in: March - April



Redbud - up to 25ft.
Cercis canadensis
Flowers in: March - April



Eastern Red Cedar - 30 - 40 ft.
Juniperus virginiana
Flowers in: March - May



Black Willow - 10 - 40 ft.
Salix nigra
Flowers in: April



Box Elder - 25 - 65 ft.
Acer negundo
Flowers in: April



Cottonwood - 65-130 ft.
Populus deltoides
Flowers in: April



Prickly Ash - 20 in to 16 ft.
Zanthoxylum americanum
Flowers in: April



Bur oak - 40 - 100 ft.
Quercus macrocarpa
Flowers in: April - May



Poison Ivy - Vine 3 - 50+ ft. long
Toxicodendron radicans
Flowers in: May



Bittersweet - Vine 50+ ft. long
Celastrus scandens
Flowers in: May - June



Green Ash - 50 - 80 ft.
Fraxinus pennsylvanica
Flowers in: April - May



Hackberry - 20 - 80+ ft.
Celtis occidentalis
Flowers in: April - May



Black Locust - up to 50 ft.
Robinia pseudo-acacia
Flowers in: May - June



Catalpa - 30 - 98 ft.
Catalpa speciosa
Flowers in: May - June



Pecan - 65 - 100+ ft.
Carya illinoensis
Flowers in: April - May



Sycamore - 60 - 100 ft.
Platanus occidentalis
Flowers: April - May



Honey Locust - 30 - 80 ft.
Gleditsia triacanthos
Flowers in: May - June



Kentucky Coffee Tree - 30 - 75+ ft.
Gymnocladus dioica
Flowers in: May - June



Western Buckeye - 3 - 12+ ft.
Aesculus glabra
Flowers in: April-May



Black Walnut - 50 - 100+ ft.
Juglans nigra
Flowers in: May



Osage Orange - 20 - 60 ft.
Maclura pomifera
Flowers in: May - June



Buttonbrush - 2 - 12 ft.
Cephalanthus occidentalis
Flowers in: July - August