

cord grass

Spartina pectinata

Kingdom: Plantae
Division: Magnoliophyta
Class: Liliopsida
Order: Cyperales
Family: Poaceae

ILLINOIS STATUS

common, native

FEATURES

Cord grass is also known as prairie cord or prairie cord grass. This sod-forming, perennial herb may grow from four to six feet tall. Stems are present both under the surface of the ground and above it. The smooth, erect stems, usually unbranched, have long, narrow leaves. Each leaf is rough along the edges and may be two feet long and two-thirds inch wide. Flowers are arranged one per spikelet, with many, flat spikelets crowded into two rows on one side of the flower spike. Each spike may be five inches long. The fruit is a small, smooth grain. Individual seed heads are one-sided and resemble a comb.

BEHAVIORS

Cord grass may be found throughout Illinois although it more commonly grows in the northern one-half of the state. This plant grows in marshes, wet prairies, wet meadows, sloughs, swamps and around ponds. Flowers are produced from June through September. The plant turns a yellow to brown color in autumn. In its early stages, cord grass is an important food source for grazing animals of the prairie.



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plants with fruiting heads



© Mary Kay Solecki

plants with fruiting heads

ILLINOIS RANGE



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fructing head



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flowering head



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leaves



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seed head

Aquatic Habitats

bottomland forests; marshes; peatlands; swamps; wet prairies and fens

Woodland Habitats

bottomland forests; southern Illinois lowlands

Prairie and Edge Habitats

black soil prairie; dolomite prairie; sand prairie