

**SOFTSTEM  
BULRUSH**  
*Schoenoplectus  
tabernaemontani* (K.C. Gmel.)  
Palla  
plant symbol = SCTA2

Contributed By: USDA, NRCS, National Plant Data Center



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**Alternative Names**

great bulrush, soft-stemmed bulrush, common bulrush, giant bulrush, bull whip, *Scirpus validus* (SCVA)

**Uses**

*Ethnobotanic:* Native Americans wove the stems of softstem bulrush into mats (Guard 1995). The dried beaten rootstocks were used by some Indian tribes as meal for bread, while the young tip of the rootstock was edible and reputed to serve as a thirst-quencher;

the boiled young roots yield sweet syrup (Steyermark 1963).

*Wildlife:* *Schoenoplectus tabernaemontani* provide food and cover for fish, muskrats, raccoons, and otters (Guard 1995). The hard-coated fruits are an important and common food source for ducks, shore birds, and marsh birds (Ibid.). This species provide nesting cover for water birds, waterfowl, and marsh wrens.

**Status**

Please consult the PLANTS Web site and your State Department of Natural Resources for this plant's current status, such as, state noxious status and wetland indicator values.

**Description**

*General:* Sedge family (Cyperaceae). Soft-stem bulrush *Schoenoplectus tabernaemontani* is a tall, perennial, herbaceous plant that grows up to ten feet tall. The leaves are highly modified into long sheaths that closely girdle stem bases (Guard 1995). The flowers are borne in an open inflorescence of many stalked, budlike spikelets, covered by reddish brown scales below the top of the stem (Tiner 1987). The fruit is a brownish gray achene (Ibid.).

*Distribution:* For current distribution, please consult the Plant profile page for this species on the PLANTS Web site.

**Adaptation**

Soft-stem bulrush occurs in deep or shallow water, or in muddy or marshy ground around lakes, ponds, streams, and wooded wetlands (Guard 1995). This species usually occurs in poorly drained soil. It grows better in saline conditions than in fresh water, and it tolerates a wide range of salinity.

**Establishment**

*Propagation by Seed:* *Schoenoplectus tabernaemontani* seeds should be sown in a cold frame as soon as they are ripe in a pot standing in three centimeters of water. The seeds germinate quickly. When they are large enough to handle, large divisions can be planted directly into their permanent positions in early summer. Place smaller divisions in pots and grow them in a cold frame, planting them when they are well established in the summer.

**Management**

*Schoenoplectus tabernaemontani* can survive following periodic draining and flooding of marshes. However, softstem bulrush stands can be reduced if prolonged draining and flooding continuously occurs.

## **Cultivars, Improved and Selected Materials (and area of origin)**

Please check the Vendor Database, expected to be on-line through the PLANTS Web site in 2001 by clicking on Plant Materials.

## **References**

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