

# Smith's Bulrush

## *Schoenoplectiella smithii*

### Description

Smith's Bulrush is an annual herb with a soft, three-sided stem that may grow to 1.5 feet in height (0.5 meters), but is usually much smaller. The leaves, which may be absent, are mostly clustered at the base of the stem, linear in shape, entire on the margin, and variable in length. The flowers, appearing from July to September, are individually only 1 to 2 mm length, being aggregated in stalkless clusters that are attached at a single point on the middle to upper portion of the stem, and are overtopped by a slender leaf-like bract. The individual fruits are black at maturity, about 2 mm in length, and lack the subtending bristles found in *Schoenoplectus purshianus*, which is a more common, similar-looking species.



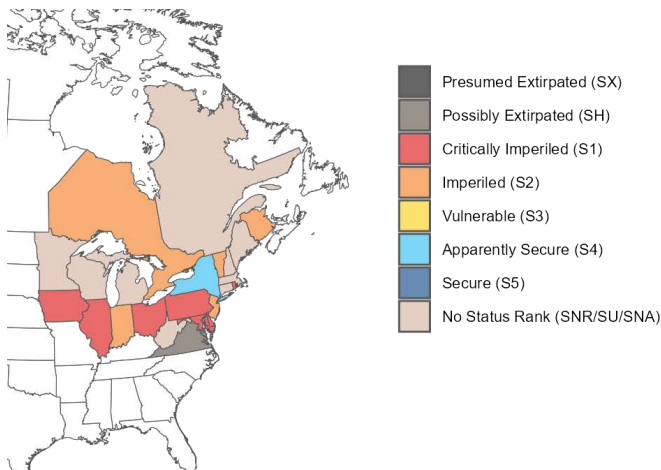
Photo source: Sieve C. Garske, Robert W. Freckmann Herbarium

### Distribution & Habitat

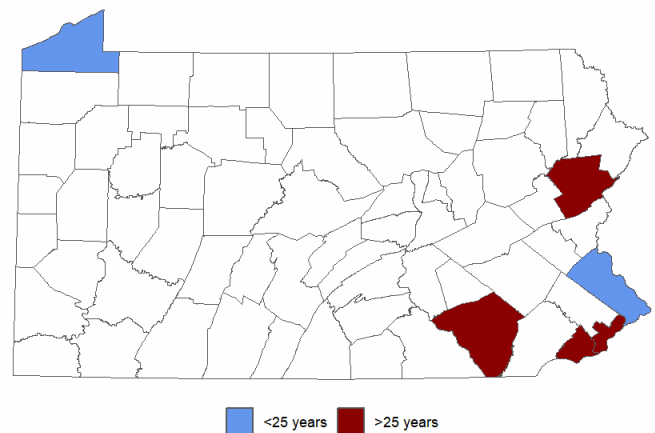
Smith's Bulrush has a range in northeastern North America and the Great Lakes states. In Pennsylvania, it has been documented historically in scattered locations, particularly in the southeastern counties along the Delaware River and in the northwestern counties. Smith's Bulrush grows in intertidal marshes, mudflats, and on shorelines. The populations in intertidal marshes are subjected to daily cycles of exposure and inundation.

### North American State/Province Conservation Status

Map by NatureServe 2025



### Smith's Bulrush (*Schoenoplectiella smithii*)



### State Status & Conservation

The PA Biological Survey (PABS) has assigned Smith's Bulrush a rarity status of Endangered, based on the relatively few populations that have been confirmed, the usually small population sizes, limited state range, and specialized habitat. The known populations have threats from exotic species, dredging and filling, and water pollution.

### NatureServe conservation status ranks

**G5?** — Globally Secure; **S1** — Critically Imperiled in Pennsylvania

### References

- NatureServe. 2025. NatureServe Explorer [web application] NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available at <https://explorer.natureserve.org> (Accessed: May 8, 2025)
- Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program. 2025.
- Rhoads, A.F. and W.M. Klein, Jr. 1993. The Vascular Flora of Pennsylvania. American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
- Rhoads, A.F. and T.A. Block. 2007. The Plants of Pennsylvania: An Illustrated Manual. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

