

Schoenoplectus saximontanus (Fernald) J. Raynal

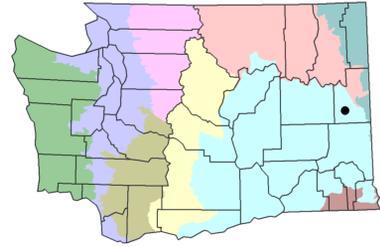
synonym: *Scirpus saximontanus* Fernald

Rocky Mountain bulrush

Cyperaceae - sedge family

status: State Threatened, BLM strategic

rank: G5 / S1



General Description: Adapted from Flora of North America (1993+): Annual or perennial. Stems often arching or lying on the ground, cylindrical, 9-65 cm x 0.5-1.5 mm. Leaves 3-4, with 1 (2) on the stem and the rest basal; blades C-shaped in cross section below, flat above, 0.2-20 cm long.

Floral Characteristics: Inflorescences of 2 types: 1) terminal, usually head-shaped, up to 15 mm long; 2) solitary female flowers enclosed in basal leaf sheaths. Terminal inflorescence with lowermost bract erect, bladelike, 5-15 cm long. Spikelets 1-20, 6-20 x 3 mm. Flower scales pale orangish brown to colorless, ovate, 2.2-3 (3.5) x 1.5 mm, with hairy margins and an awn 0.2-1 mm. Perianth absent. Stamens 3. Styles all 3-forked.

Fruits: Achenes from terminal inflorescence blackish brown, equilaterally and sharply 3-angled, ovoid to obovoid, 1.3-1.8 mm long, sharply ridged, with a beak 0.1 mm long. Achenes from solitary female flowers 2.2-3 mm, including the 0.3 mm beak. Identifiable summer to fall.

Identification Tips: This species is not in Hitchcock & Cronquist (1973). In our region, *S. saximontanus* is generally an annual, rarely over 30 cm tall, has cylindrical stems, prominently cross-wrinkled achenes, and lacks perianth bristles. Other *Schoenoplectus* in the Pacific Northwest are usually well over 50 cm tall and have bristlelike perianth parts. *S. pungens* may be from 0.1-2 m tall, but has sharply 3-angled stems and 4-8 perianth parts.

Range: B.C., WA, CA, the Great Plains, the Southwest and northern Mexico.

Habitat/Ecology: Damp soils, freshwater ponds, ditches, and vernal moist areas. In WA this species grows on moderately alkaline, drying mudflats at 700 m (2300 ft). Associated species include needleleaf navarretia (*Navarretia intertexta*), centaury (*Centaurium* spp.), dwarf spike-rush (*Eleocharis parvula*), northwestern yellowflax (*Sclerolinon digynum*), and lesser Indian paintbrush (*Castilleja minor* var. *exilis*).

Comments: Current threats include invasion of reed canarygrass (*Phalaris arundinacea*), hydrologic changes, and habitat loss. This taxon has been extirpated from OH, and is rare in B.C. and several states.

References: Douglas et al. 1998-2002, vol. 6; Flora of North America 1993+, vol. 23.



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