

## AMERICAN BUR- REED

*Sparganium americanum* Nutt.

Plant Symbol = SPAM

Contributed by: USDA NRCS National Plant Data  
Center



© George F. Russell  
Botany Department, Smithsonian Institution  
@ PLANTS

### Uses

**Ethnobotanic.**..The Klamath Indians dug the tubers (possibly *Sparganium angustifolium*, *S. erectum*, and/or *S. eurycarpum*) produced in late autumn from the creeping rootstocks of some of the species of this genus, and use them as food (Steyermark 1963). An infusion of *Sparganium erectum* can be mixed with other plant leaves and used in the treatment of chills (Moerman 1998). A decoction of *Sparganium stoloniferum* root was used in the treatment of chest pains and abdominal pain (Yeung 1985).

### 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:** Bur-reed family (Sparaniaceae).

American bur-reed

*Sparganium americanum* (SPAM)

branched bur-reed

*Sparganium androcladum* (SPAN)

narrowleaf bur-reed

*Sparganium angustifolium* (SPAN2)

simplestem bur-reed

*Sparganium erectum* (SPER)

broadfruit bur-reed

*Sparganium eurycarpum* (SPEU)

floating bur-reed

*Sparganium fluctuans* (SPFL)

clustered bur-reed

*Sparganium glomeratum* (SPGL)

northern bur-reed

*Sparganium hyperboreum* (SPHY)

small bur-reed

*Sparganium natans* (SPNA)

These bur-reed species are native, herbaceous marsh or pond plants with rootstocks. The leaves are alternate, stiff and erect or limp and floating, linear, and internally septate (The Great Plains Flora Association 1986). The individual flowers are small and occur in separate male (staminate) or female (pistillate) globular clusters on the same plant. (Steyermark 1963).

**Distribution:** A genus of twenty or more *Sparganium* species is widely distributed in temperate and colder latitudes of the eastern and western hemispheres, and in eastern North America (Braun 1967). For current distribution, please consult the Plant profile page for this species on the PLANTS Web site.

### Adaptation

This species grows best on wet ground in rich soil. It prefers full sun but can tolerate some shade.

*Sparganium* species is mostly found in muddy or shallow water of swamps and ponds. For current distribution, please consult the Plant profile page for this species on the PLANTS Web site

## Establishment

*Propagation by Seed:* *Sparanium* seeds should be sown as soon as they are ripe in the greenhouse. This species should be placed in pots standing in two to three centimeters of water. Place the seedlings into individual pots when they are large enough to handle and gradually increase the depth of water with plant growth. Plant *Sparanium* sp to their permanent positions in the summer.

Large divisions can be planted directly into their permanent positions. While allowing smaller potted divisions to grow in a cold frame until they are well established and ready for summer out-planting to their permanent location..

## Management

Seeds of most aquatic plants should be sown as soon as they are ripe. The seeds lose viability quickly if it is allowed to dry out. If immediate sowing is inconvenient, store seeds in moist peat, or substitute in a plastic bag and keep frost-free (Heuser 1997).

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

Contact your local Natural Resources Conservation Service (formerly Soil Conservation Service) office for more information. Look in the phone book under "United States Government." The Natural Resources Conservation Service will be listed under the subheading "Department of Agriculture."

## References

Braun, L.E. 1967. *The monocotyledoneae from cat-tails to orchids*. The Ohio State University Press, Columbus, Ohio.

Gleason, H. A. & A. Cronquist 1993. *Manual of vascular plants of northeastern United States and adjacent Canada*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. The New York Botanical Garden, Bronx, New York.

Heuser, C. W. 1997. *The complete book of plant propagation*. The Taunton Press, Newtown, Connecticut.

Peck, M.E. 1961. *A manual of the higher plants of Oregon*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Oregon State University Press, Portland, Oregon.

Small, J.K. 1933. *Manual of the southeastern flora*. The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

Steyermark, J. A. 1963. *Flora of Missouri*. The Iowa State University Press, Ames, Iowa.

Strausbaugh, P. D. & E. L. Core 1977. *Flora of West Virginia*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Seneca Books, Inc., Morgantown, West Virginia.

The Great Plains Flora Association 1986. *Flora of the Great Plains*. University Press of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas.

Yeung, H.C. 1985. *Handbook of Chinese herbs and formulas*. Institute of Chinese Medicine, Los Angeles, California.

## Prepared By

*Jammie Favorite*

formerly USDA, NRCS, National Plant Data Center, Baton Rouge, Louisiana

## Species Coordinator

*M. Kat Anderson*

USDA, NRCS, National Plant Data Center, c/o Plant Sciences Dept., Davis, California

Edited: 19jun02 jsp; 03jun03 ahv; 060817 jsp

For more information about this and other plants, please contact your local NRCS field office or Conservation District, and visit the PLANTS Web site <<http://plants.usda.gov>> or the Plant Materials Program Web site <<http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov>>

*The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at 202-720-2600 (voice and TDD).*

*To file a complaint of discrimination write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call 202-720-5964 (voice or TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.*

*Read about [Civil Rights at the Natural Resources Conservation Service](#).*