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)
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."

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