

FLOWERING RUSH

Butomus umbellatus

Status in Maine: localized



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Description: Perennial, herbaceous, emergent aquatic plant, 3-5' tall (~3' above water). Conspicuous when in flower. **Leaves:** Sword-like, long linear, ± flattened or weakly triangular in cross section, spongy, typically 3-5' long.

Flowers/seeds: Umbel-like terminal inflorescences, with 20-50 flowers, on a tall, thick, round stem as tall or taller than the leaves. Pale pink flowers are 6-petaled and ~¾-1" wide. Each flower can produce up to 200 seeds. **Root:** Fleshy rhizomes that fragment easily. Field identification can be challenging; some populations do not produce flowers and some inhabit deeper water where they have a submerged form with longer, flatter leaf blades and no flowers.

Native range: Europe & Western Asia. **How arrived in U.S.:** As an ornamental.

Reproduction: Potentially up to four ways, including by seed, vegetative bulbils on flowers (similar to those on garlic scapes), vegetative bulblets on rhizomes, and rhizome fragments. The ability of populations to flower and reproduce sexually depends on their founding genome. Regardless, the plant spreads rapidly by rhizome growth and small fragments of carbohydrate-rich rhizome can easily float away to invade new sites.

Habitat: Fresh water lakes and ponds, ditches, canals, slow moving streams, and rivers. Although typically found in shallow water, which is what has been observed for Maine, it has been found elsewhere growing in a fully-submerged form in channels up to 20' deep.



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Similar native species: There are several native emergent plants with large sword-shaped leaves including sweetflag (*Acorus americanus*), some of the bur-reeds (*Sparganium* spp.), and native irises (*Iris* spp.). It is difficult to distinguish these species unless they are flowering or fruiting. Emergent bur-reeds have keeled (weakly V-shaped) leaves that grow alternately along the stem (vs. basal leaves in flowering rush). Sweetflag and iris leaves are flat in cross section with a noticeable mid-rib (vs. weakly triangular in flowering rush). Vegetative flowering rush is difficult to detect when mixed in with cattails (*Typha* spp.).

Similar non-native species: The non-native sweetflag (*Acorus calamus*) has flat leaves.

Control methods: Early detection and careful manual eradication are critical for control. Repeated cutting below water level throughout the growing season should eventually deplete energy reserves. Raking of plants is NOT advised. Excavation of the entire plant can work, but all parts must be collected, and special care must be given to prevent rhizome fragments and bulblets from escaping. Plant parts and especially rhizomes should be thoroughly dried and killed. ***Special rules apply to herbicide use in or near wetlands and waterbodies - see the section in the back of this guide titled "Use of Herbicides to Control Invasive Plants in or Near Wetlands and Waterbodies."***

