

Scirpus-like Rush

Juncus scirpoides

Description

Scirpus-like Rush is a perennial grass-like herb with a rounded aerial stem that may reach 2 feet (0.6 m) in height, and also produces horizontal underground stems, or rhizomes. The leaves have a sheathing basal portion and an elongate and linear blade that is rounded in cross-section, unlike the flat blades found in most grass-like plants, and has a series of horizontal thickenings found at regular intervals along its length. The minute flowers, appearing in summer, are grouped in dense, rounded clusters on the branches of the upper part of the aerial stem. Each individual flower has 6 parts that are analogous to the green sepals and colored petals found on many kinds of flowers, but in this species the parts are only 1/8 inch (2-4 mm) in length, more-or-less similar in shape to each other, vary from green to light brown to reddish, and surround the 3 stamens, or pollen-producing structures within the flower. The fruit consists of a dry capsule that equals or slightly exceeds the flower parts, and when mature splits open to release the microscopic (0.4-0.5 mm) brownish seeds.



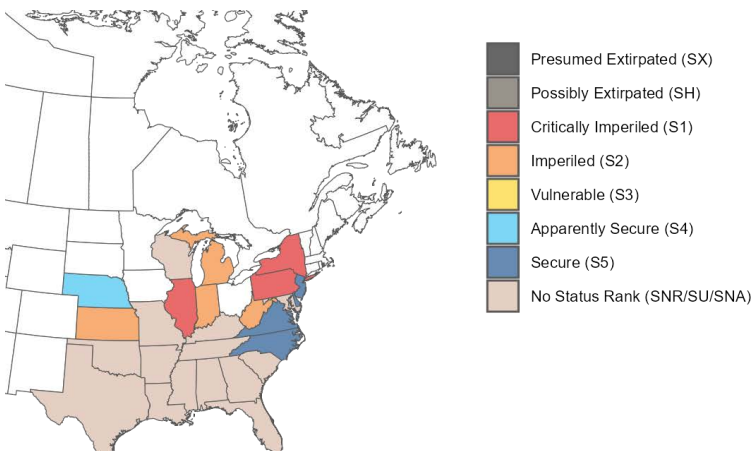
Photo source: John Kunsman, PNHP

Distribution & Habitat

Scirpus-like Rush ranges from New York to Wisconsin and south into Florida and Texas. In Pennsylvania, this species represents a southern species and has been documented in a few eastern counties. It grows on shorelines of ponds, lakes and streams, and in bogs and marshes.

North American State/Province Conservation Status

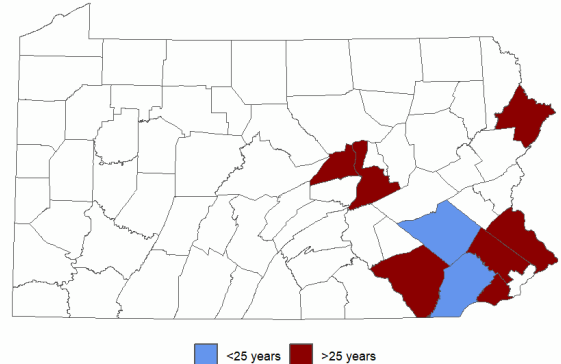
Map by NatureServe 2025



Current State Status

The PA Biological Survey (PABS) considers Scirpus-like Rush to be a species of special concern, based on the very few locations recently confirmed and the wetland habitat. It has a PA legal rarity status and a PABS suggested rarity status of Endangered.

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Conservation Considerations

The viability of populations of Scirpus-like Rush and its habitat may be enhanced by creating buffers and protecting the natural hydrology around wetlands and controlling invasive species.

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. 2nd edition. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

