

Flowering rush

(*Butomus umbellatus*)

High priority AIS not yet present in
Lower Wisconsin River basin as of January, 2012

What is it?

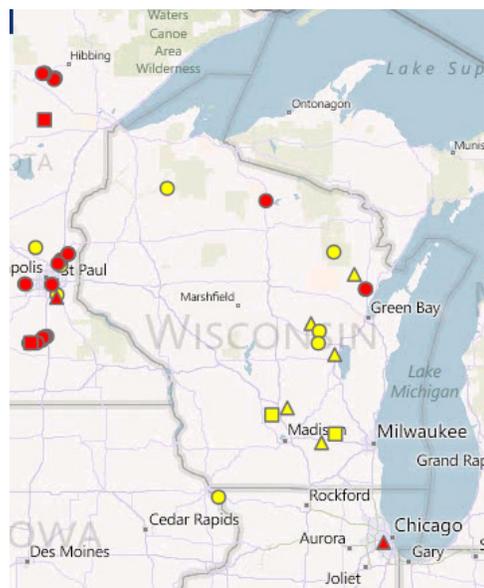
Flowering rush is an emergent perennial aquatic herb that is native to Eurasia. Its leaves are sedge-like above the water surface and limp if they stay submerged beneath the water. Flowering rush grows in shallow, slow moving waters; it is typically found in marshes, lakes, ponds, and slow-moving areas of rivers. It can grow up to three feet tall above the water surface. When not in bloom, flowering rush is hard to distinguish from native bur-reed.

Where is it?

Flowering rush has spread into many temperate regions around the world. In the Midwest, it established populations can be found in the Upper Mississippi River basin, as well as throughout the Great Lakes region. Flowering rush has been found in Lake Wisconsin in the Wisconsin River basin.

How does it spread?

Flowering rush was intentionally brought to North America as an ornamental plant. From the intentional plantings, it has been moved to new locations unintentionally by muskrat, waterfowl, and boater movement. Viable pieces of the plant can also be transported by movement of water and ice.



Wisconsin distribution of flowering rush. Red=established population, yellow=specimen(s) collected. (USGS, 2011)

Why do we care?

Flowering rush can quickly colonize a disturbed area, which gives it an advantage over native plant species in ecosystems that have repetitive disturbances. Once it has established, flowering rush tends to form large stands that can impede boat traffic and outcompete native plants. In high densities, flowering rush has negative impacts on economically valuable wild rice and native species of willows and cattails.

What can we do?

Currently, the most frequently used method of control for flowering rush is manual cutting of the plant below the water surface. However, this is labor-intensive and must be done multiple times a year because the plants grow back from their roots. If the infestation is very small, eradication may be possible by carefully removing all of the plant and root material. However, extreme care must be taken when removing the roots because disturbance of the root can cause reproductive bulbets to break off and establish in a new location. Current research is being done on different herbicides for flowering rush treatment. Diquat and Aquathol K are showing promise, but more research is still needed.

STOP AQUATIC HITCHHIKERS!

Wisconsin law requires you to:

- **Inspect** boats, trailers, and equipment.
- **Remove** all attached aquatic plants and animals.
- **Drain** all water from boats, vehicles and equipment.
- **Never move** plants or live fish away from a waterbody.

If you suspect that you have found an invasive species call 1-888-WDNR-INFO (1-888-936-7463) to report it.



Flowering rush (Gary Fewless)