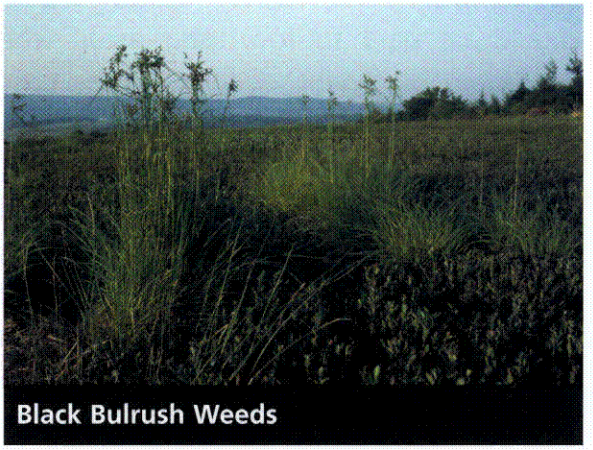
Lowbush Blueberry Fact Sheet

Black Bulrush

Scirpus atrovirens Willd.
Other names: Bulrush, Green Bulrush, Scirpus

Description

Black bulrush is a perennial sedge which forms a dense tussock, or basal clump. The flowering stems are slender and elongate in mid summer reaching a height of 1 to 1.5 m. The main leaves are up to 18 mm wide and found mostly on the lower half of the stem. Sedges are often confused with grass and rush species; however a distinguishing characteristic of sedges is a triangular stem.


Black Bulrush Weeds

The inflorescence contains a number of spikes with short cylindric spikelets 2-8 mm long that are crowded into a dense, compact cluster. The seed is very pale to white, 3-angled and 0.8-1.2 mm long. Bristles on the seed are pale, inconspicuous and straight, shorter to slightly longer than the seed, and may even be lacking.

Economic Importance

Black bulrush is commonly found scattered throughout Eastern Canada, west to Saskatchewan and south to Georgia. It is one of the most common native wetland species in Nova Scotia. It is often found in wet, low-lying areas of blueberry fields that are unfavorable for blueberry plant growth, but will also infest drier, well-drained sites. It appears initially as scattered plants in blueberry fields but can rapidly multiply, especially on weed-free ground or in fields with reduced rates of Velpar, to become a serious weed problem. Black bulrush is very competitive and interferes with harvesting.


Black Bulrush Seedlings

Life Cycle

Black bulrush reproduces only by seed. Seed germination and seedling emergence occurs throughout the season, particularly in the year after Velpar application. Young plants tiller profusely forming the basal tussock over a period of several years. Mature bulrush begins to bolt and produce its inflorescence in late June. Seed matures in September and can be viable in the soil for many years.

Scirpus atrovirens Willd.
(Bulrush)

Control Strategy

Monitoring of blueberry fields should be carried out to identify the weed. Careful attention should be paid to low lying areas where drainage is insufficient. Seed production can be prevented by cutting the flowering stems in late summer before seed matures. However, seed is also introduced and spread on machinery, especially mowers. Recommended rates of hexazinone (Velpar™/Pronone™) will control most small seedlings on dry sites, but will not control larger, tillering seedlings or mature plants, and control is poor on wet sites. Use of Aatrex™ or Sinbar™ will not improve control.

Control of mature black bulrush can be obtained by wiping or spot spraying with glyphosate. For further information on these treatments, consult the Weed Control for Lowbush Blueberries.

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