

Pod-grass

Scheuchzeria palustris

Description

Pod-grass is a perennial grass-like plant, greatly resembling a rush (*Juncus* sp.), with a zig-zag stem that may grow to 1.5 feet (1.5 m) in height. The plant often forms colonies because of the presence of wide-spreading underground stems, or rhizomes. The hairless leaves are alternately arranged, consisting of a prominent basal sheathing portion that envelops the stem and a linear and elongate, ascending blade that is 2-12 inches (5-30 cm) in length and less than 3/16 inch (1-4 mm) in width. The most distinctive leaf feature may be the presence of a small pore-like opening just below the tip. The minute flowers, appearing in late May to July, are greenish and often tinged with yellow or red, 1/8 inch (2-4 mm) in length, and occur in stalked clusters above the leaves. The plant gets its common name, and is probably most conspicuous, in the fruiting stage, which consists of a dry pod, typically grouped in 3's and connected at their bases, containing small seeds.

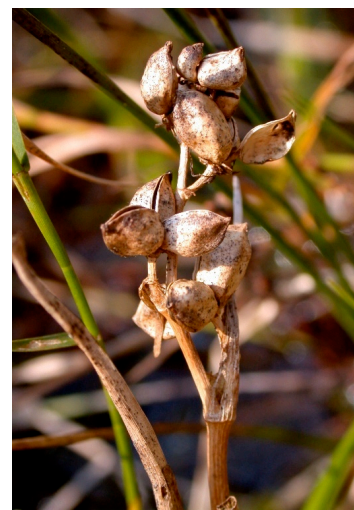
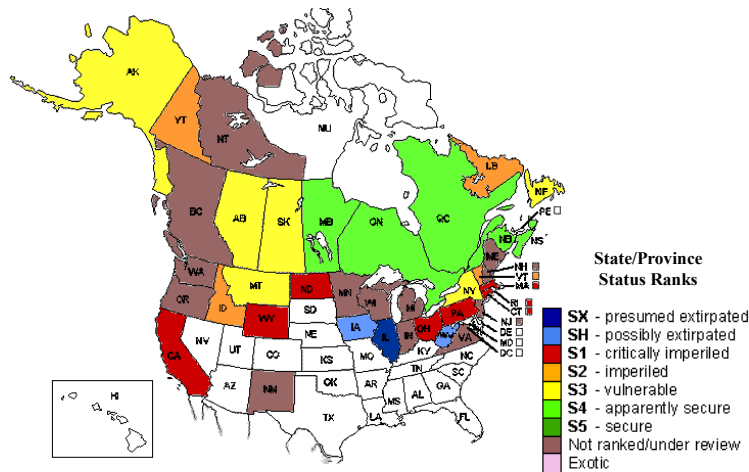


Photo source: Rich Zaino

North American State/Province Conservation Status

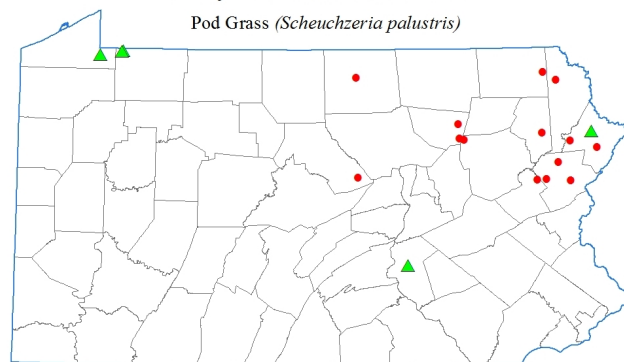
Map by NatureServe 2014



Distribution & Habitat

Pod-grass has a transcontinental range across the cooler regions of North America. In Pennsylvania, it represents a northerly species, and has been documented historically mostly in the northern counties. It grows in bogs and peaty wetlands.

Pennsylvania Distribution



▲ records since 1980 ● records pre-1980
Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program Data 3-2015

Current State Status

The PA Biological Survey (PABS) considers Pod-grass to be a species of special concern, based on the very few locations that have been recently confirmed and the specialized habitat. It has a PA legal rarity status and a PABS suggested rarity status of Endangered.

Conservation Considerations

The viability of populations of Pod-grass and its habitat may be enhanced by creating buffers and protecting the natural hydrology surrounding wetlands and controlling invasive species. Pod-grass is often an indicator for bog habitats that may feature various orchids, insectivorous plants such as sundew, bladderwort, and pitcher plant, and other interesting species.

NatureServe conservation status ranks

G5 – Globally secure; S1 – Critically imperiled in Pennsylvania

References

- NatureServe. 2014. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 7.1. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available <http://www.natureserve.org/explorer>.
- Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program. 2014.
- 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.

