



# Whatcom Weeds

Whatcom County Noxious Weed Control Board 901 W. Smith Road Bellingham WA 98226  
(360) 354-3990 [www.co.whatcom.wa.us/publicworks/weeds](http://www.co.whatcom.wa.us/publicworks/weeds)

## FLOWERING RUSH

*Butomus umbellatus*

**THREAT:** Flowering rush, a native of Asia, was probably introduced to North America as a garden ornamental. It has escaped cultivation and invades freshwater areas, where it can form dense stands, displacing native vegetation and interfering with boat traffic. It spreads by seeds, root fragments and rhizomes, which can be dispersed by water, boating equipment and animals. This plant is still also used in gardens. Flowering rush is difficult to control, whether using mechanical or chemical means. Flowering rush occurs in Silver Lake, in Whatcom County. It is illegal to buy, sell or transport flowering rush in Washington State.

**DESCRIPTION:** Flowering rush is an aquatic perennial, which can grow either as a submersed or emergent plant. A freshwater species, intolerant of brackish water, it grows on the banks of rivers, lakes and ponds, and in marshes and wet areas. Flowering rush can grow on dry banks of water bodies and in water, up to 6 feet deep. The leaves are fleshy and triangular in cross-section, growing either erect or floating on water surface, depending on the form of the plant. The white to pink flowers are borne in umbels atop a single flower stalk. Flower stalks are usually taller than the leaves and can reach up to 3 feet above the water surface. Flowers are produced from summer to fall, depending on the depth of the water. Flowers produce beaked fruit, about ½ inch long. Some flowering rush plants do not produce flowers, making it difficult to identify. Flowering rush spreads vegetatively by means of fleshy rhizomes.

**MANAGEMENT OPTIONS:** Flowering rush is difficult to control, once established. To prevent the spread of this, and other, aquatic weeds, all boats and equipment should be inspected before being moved between water bodies. Flowering rush can be controlled using mechanical and chemical control. Cutting and digging can be used to control this plant, but only if extreme care is taken to remove all plant parts from areas with water. It is difficult to control with herbicides, but chemical treatment may be effective on plants growing on land or in very shallow water. To be effective, control work must be continued, as needed, throughout several growing seasons. Contact the weed control board for chemical recommendations.



Photo: Kitty Kohout and Wisconsin State Herbarium