

W.3 BULRUSH/PAPKUIL

(*Typha capensis* (Rohrb.) N.E. Br.)

Family: Typhaceae

(Compiled by the Botanical Research Institute, Pretoria)

Bulrush is a robust perennial with an erect, unbranched, jointless stem up to 3 to 4 m high which grows from a horizontal rhizome. Its long, grass-like leaves, which arise at or near the base of the plant, are 10 to 20 mm broad. The inflorescence is a very dense, cylindrical spike consisting of many minute, unisexual flowers. The lower portion, consisting of female flowers, is wider than the upper and it turns brown in fruit. The upper, male part of the inflorescence is narrower and lighter in colour and, after its flowers have dropped off, the tip of the axis remains naked. The mature female portion of the inflorescence bursts open and spreads minute seeds surrounded by masses of silky hairs.

Related species

A second species, *T. domingensis* Pers., has been recorded from the region. Its leaves are spotted

towards the base and in the inflorescence there is a distinct gap between the male and the female portions.

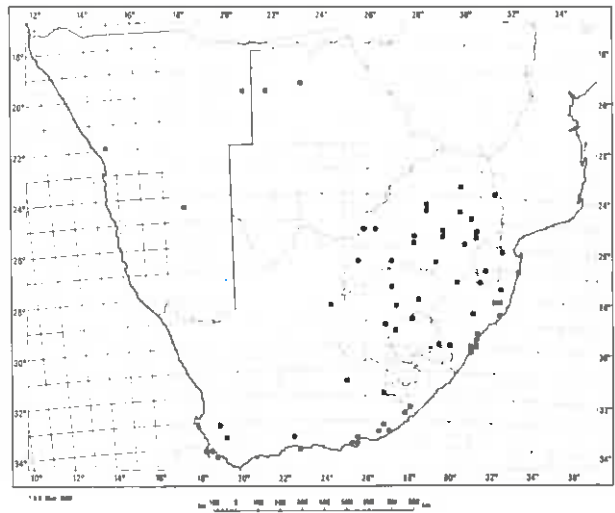
Distribution

Bulrush is widely distributed throughout most of Southern Africa.

Ecology

It grows in mud or in still to slow-flowing, moderately fresh to brackish water up to 0,5 (or sometimes 1) m deep. It often forms dense, pure stands along stream banks, in ditches and in swamps, and is tolerant of domestic pollution.





Legislation and Control

There is no legislation for the control of bulrush. For control measures see Steyn, Scott, Ashton & Vivier (1979).

Notes

The name *Typha* is derived from the Greek *tuphos* = marsh; *capensis* = from the Cape.

Species Number: 0049.000-00100

Importance

Bulrush may become a problem by impeding water-flow, by covering small dams and by interfering with boating and fishing from the banks. It provides food for birds, harbours wildlife and offers suitable breeding conditions to mosquitoes. It causes deposition of silt and thus increases water clarity. Bulrush helps to protect banks against erosion from wave wash, such as caused by speedboats, and from flood damage.

Literature

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