

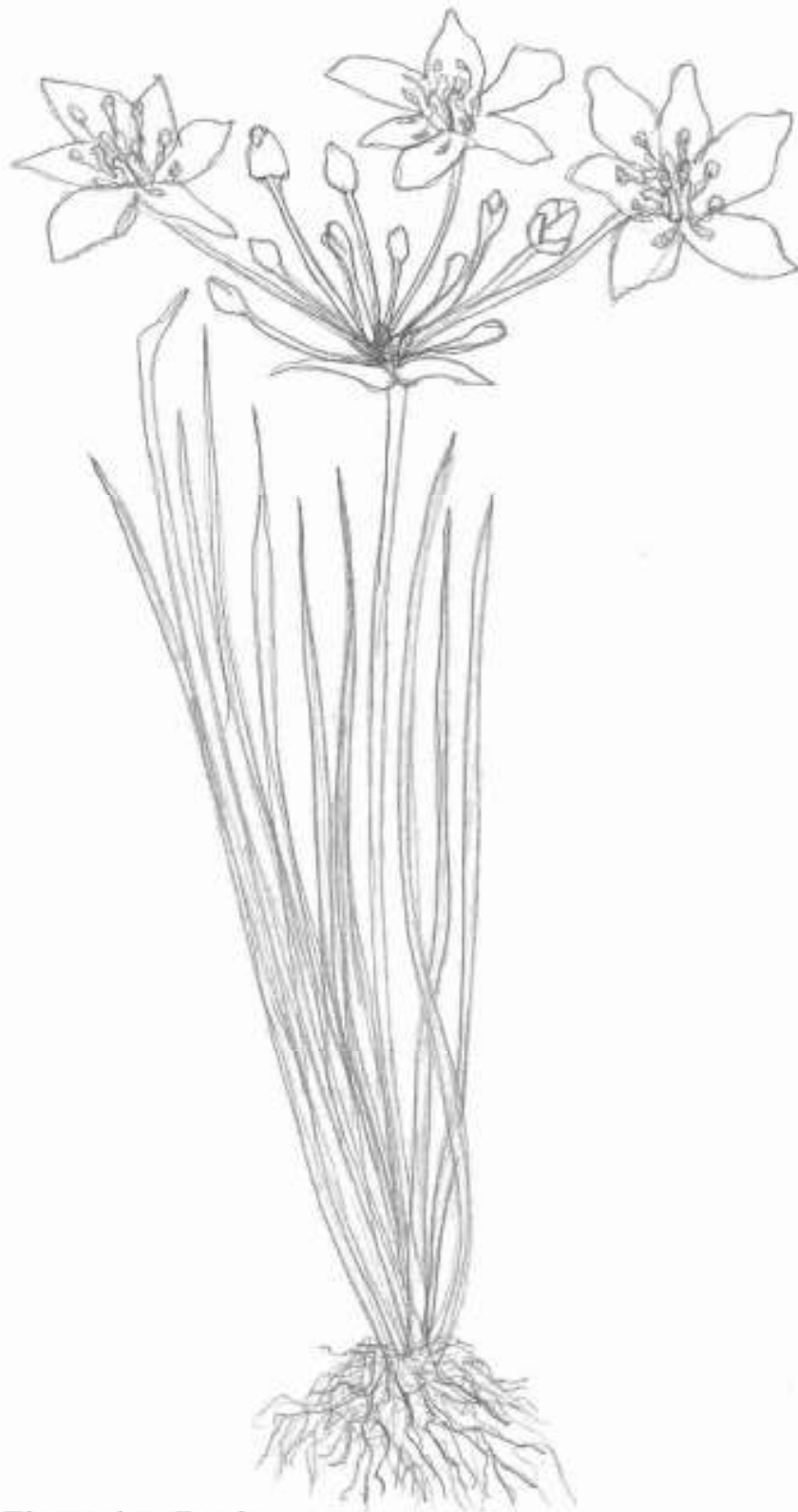


Kids For Turtles Environmental Education Invasive Species by Bob Bowles

**Flowering Rush**  
***(Butomus umbellatus)***

Flowering rush is a perennial aquatic shoreline plant, native to Eurasian that was likely introduced as a garden plant in the late 1800s. It is widely available in nurseries and garden centers as a popular ornamental water garden plant. This very hardy plant able to survive in a large temperature range is now found from Nova Scotia to British Columbia in Canada. Flowering rush was first observed in the Montreal area in 1897 and from there it spread down the St. Lawrence River to the mouth where it spread was limited by the salt water. It also spread into Lakes Ontario, Champlain, Erie, St. Clair and Michigan now occurring in eight provinces and 14 states from coast to coast in North America. Most of the locations where it is found are widely distributed which may indicate that these are the results of ornamental garden escapes. It produces a characteristic umbrella-shaped cluster of white to pink upright flowers with three petals and three sepals. The leaves are long and narrow, triangular in cross-section with the tips twisted in a spiral. It can grow in submersed water up to three meters but grows best along the shoreline as an emergent plant in about one meter of water. The plants need sunlight to obtain energy to set seed usually in very shallow water or on dryer sites. It spreads primarily from thick, creeping rhizomes which break off in disturbed water to form new plants. The rhizomes also produce many small tubers that form new plants if they break off. The plants produce many seeds and also tiny bulblets that break off and float away on the currents to produce new plants. Flowering rush will form thick colonies where new land is exposed as a result of lower water levels. Rushes usually produce small green or brown insignificant flowers so you can imagine my excitement when I first found this species in full bloom with its showy flowers growing along the shores of Sparrow Lake and my disappointment when I found out it was an invasive species. I have watched this stand in Sparrow Lakes now for several years and it does not appear to have increased in size or spread quickly to other areas. Like most other invasive plant species it seems like man was the reason for its introduction but with such beautiful, showy flowers I can understand how that has happen in the case of this plant. In past articles, I have mentioned purple loosestrife and giant hogweed which are two other invasive species with showy flowers which appealed to man who aid their introductions as well.

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Flowering Rush

Illustration by Bob Bowles