

January 2024 Plant of the Month



Sparganium americanum Nutt., American Bur-reed

January's *Plant of the Month* starts the new year with an aquatic species found in New Jersey's slow moving streams, the American bur-reed. *Sparganium americanum* is a common monocot, in the cattail family, Typhaceae. Bur-reed is an obligate wetland species. It is a fleshy, native perennial. Hough (1983) identifies specimens have been collected from all counties with the exception of the northern urban counties of Passaic, Morris, Union and Hudson.

American bur-reed is one of six species native to the state (*Sparganium americanum*, *androcladium*, *angustifolium*, *chlorocarpum*, *eurycarpum*, and *minimum*). Each are distinguished by variations in the flowering stem and achenes. Our *Plant of the Month* is the most common, and most wide-spread in the New Jersey distribution.

Native Americans used members of the genus for a variety of medicinal applications, such as for chills. The Plant of the Month is a soft perennial that is not visible in a mature form until late May. *Sparganium* often over winters as submerged evergreen leaves, that mimic the form of wild celery. If you want to see this plant, head to a sunny stream bank or lake shore and look for the distinctive clusters of flowers when they appear next growing season.

JRA, 1/2024