

# *Juncus effusus* L. 'Spiralis'

## Corkscrew Rush

**Other Common Names:** Corkscrew Soft Rush, Junquera, Spiral Rush.

**Family:** Juncaceae.

**Cold Hardiness:** Corkscrew Rush tolerates the heat of USDA zone 9, but there is some disagreement on the level of cold hardiness it possesses with various authorities listing it as cold hardy in zones 5, or only to 6, or 7.

**Foliage:** Semi-evergreen cylindrical coiling foliage is 1/8 to 3/8 in diameter; new stems are light green and tightly coiled; older stems are medium to dark green in color and uncoiling somewhat as they age, maturing to yellow-brown or tan-brown in winter.

**Flower:** Insignificant ornamentally, occurring in the upper canopy, but seldom produced on this cultivar.

**Fruit:** Ovoid capsules; not ornamental.

**Stem / Bark:** Stems — green spiraling corkscrew-shaped stems arising in a clump from short rhizomes; Buds — imbedded below ground in the rhizomes; Bark — not applicable.

**Habit:** This cultivar forms an interesting twisted clump of green and tan corkscrew-shaped thin tubular stems; plants are generally smaller than the species type, mostly growing 1 to 2 (2 1/2) tall, however, one reference reports it to 5 tall; the largest specimens of this cultivar that the author has observed were not over 2 tall; the overall texture is medium to medium-fine.

**Cultural Requirements:** Corkscrew Rush tolerates full sun, but in our region it grows best in partial shade and in shallow, 2 to 4 deep, water in bog conditions along a pond edge; plants can also be grown in less water logged soils; a steady moisture source is needed for good growth and Corkscrew Rush seldom lives up to expectations on drier sites; plants can be divided every few years if they become overgrown.

**Pathological Problems:** Few pests or diseases are problematic, but dry soils create physiological stress; stems tend to die-back quickly when drought stressed.

**Ornamental Assets:** The unique corkscrew-shaped stems are the main ornamental asset, with tolerance to wet soils as a plus.

**Limitations & Liabilities:** Droughty soils are the primary limitation; this cultivar does not appear to be as cold hardy as the species type; without regular removal of senescing stems this plant tends to look rather ratty and growth rates tend to be rather slow.

**Landscape Utilization:** This novelty plant has been used as a bog garden or shallow water garden subject, as well as on the margins of water features above the water's edge; it can also be grown as a novelty in a container, but regular irrigation and a moist substrate are required; the spiraling stems are sometimes cut for use in floral arrangements.

**Other Comments:** This cultivar has enjoyed a surge in popularity in recent years for its interesting foliage and well behaved tendencies not to spread as aggressively as many *Juncus*; stems of the species type were used as candles in medieval times by dipping them in wax or grease; stems of the species type are used in Japan to make mats called "tatami"; the genus name is the ancient Latin name for a Rush; the specific epithet means loosely spreading, which is more appropriate for this cultivar than the habit of the species type; the cultivar name obviously refers to the shape of the stems; this taxon might be more accurately described as *J. effusus* f. *spiralis* as it tends to breed more or less true to type from seed.

**Native Habitat:** This cultivar is a horticultural selection from Japan; the species type, however, has a wide native range encompassing much of the Northern Hemisphere, being found in North America, Europe and Asia; *Juncus effusus* is native to East and Southeast Texas.

**Related Taxa:** The species type, *Juncus effusus* L., known as Common Rush, Green Bullrush, or Soft Rush, is also sometimes encountered in the nursery trade; it has straight strongly vertical stems; *Juncus effusus* is valued for its narrow upright habit and tendency to stay where it is planted, unlike other more invasive *Juncus spp.*; with age, clumps tend to develop more of a fan-like outline; cold hardiness of this species is highly variable among provenances ranging from USDA zones 4 to 7 in minimum cold tolerance, while most plants can be grown as far south as zone 9; the genus *Juncus* L. contains 200 to 300 species of which several are ecologically important as estuary plants, for erosion control, and for wildlife habitat.

***Juncus roemerianus* G.H.A. Scheele**

**Needle Rush**

- C *Juncus roemerianus* is also known as Black Needle Rush, Black Rush, Needle Grass, or Roemer's Rush; Needle Rush is strongly vertical, spreading via rhizomes to grow rigidly up to 7Nin height; stems terminate in sharp cylindrical points.
- C Needle Rush is highly salt tolerant and is a dominant species in South Atlantic to Gulf Coast marshes where it is an important ecological component of the native flora; this is a significant species along much of the Southeastern U.S. coasts, ranging from Maryland to East Texas; it is found in Texas along the Galveston Island coast.
- C Throughout much of the Southeastern U.S., *J. roemerianus* grows in a broad band above the Smooth Cordgrass or Salt-Water Cordgrass (*Spartina alterniflora* J.L.A. Loiseleur-Deslongchamps) or Sacahuiste [*Spartina spartinae* (C.B. von Trinius) Merr. ex Hitchcock (*Spartina junciflormis*, *Vilfa sparinae*, Gulf Cordgrass)] which occurs in a swath between the *J. roemerianus* and the ocean; the color and textural differences create a distinct contrast and often occur in a sharply noticeable line.

**References:** Darke, 1999; Greenlee, 1992; Grounds, 2002; Harris, 2003; Tomocik, 1996.

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