

DID YOU KNOW?

I hope at some point in your life you have been intrigued by the grass-like plant with segmented stems commonly found growing along water courses and in other wet places.

I still find satisfaction in the popping noise made by pulling apart the segments. Growing up, we called it *puzzleglass* because it could be pulled apart and then pushed back together like a puzzle. For me, a summer would not be complete without it. My kids are equally intrigued, and I have taught my daughter & her friends how to remove the top & wrap the stem in a circle, hooking the ends together to make a necklace.

Here are some interesting facts about this plant you may not know...

EQUISETUM



Common names for Equisetum include horsetail, scouring rush, puzzleglass, skeletonweed, snakegrass, & snakeweed.

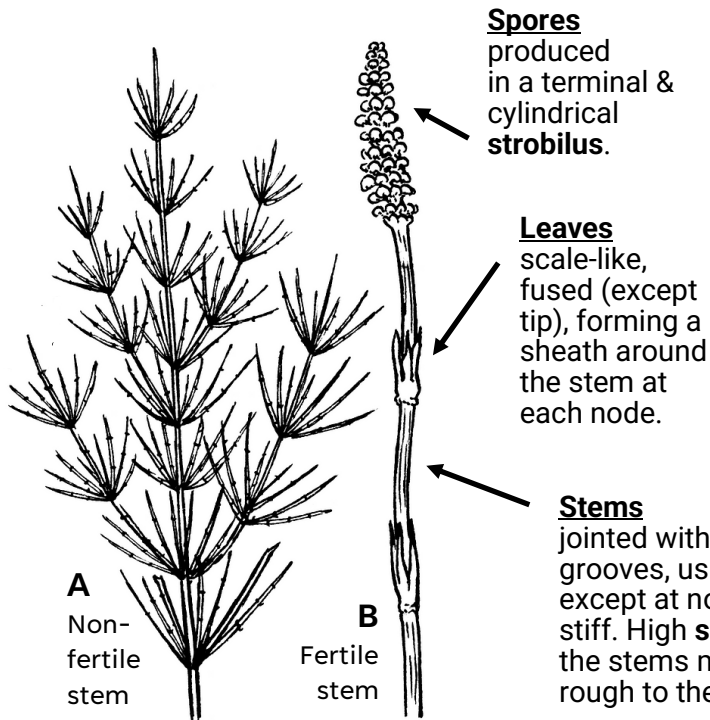
Equisetum is the only living genus in **Equisetaceae**, a family of vascular plants that reproduce by **spores**, not seeds. Although this is not the only family of living plants with spores, it's important to note that chronologically, plants that reproduce by spores evolved long before seed producing plants.

The scientific name for this genus of plants is '**Equisetum**'. Descriptive of physical characteristics of the plant, the name Equisetum is derived from the **Latin** root words equus, meaning '**horse**', & seta, meaning '**bristle**'.

The genus Equisetum includes 15 extant species with worldwide distribution. Of these species, four are found in our area (up to 10,000 ft). These **four species** have many similar characteristics that make Equisetum easy to spot & a few differences that set each individual species apart.

Three of the species in our area produce only fertile stems (**B**), which are green & unbranched.

One species is **dimorphic**, meaning it produces 2 types of stems:
A - branched vegetative stems which produce no strobili & are green.
B - unbranched fertile stems which are brown because they lack chlorophyll & whither after producing spores.



Equisetum has perennial rhizomes, which are continuous underground stems capable of producing shoots & roots.

Paleobotanists have evidence that the evolutionary history of Equisetaceae can be traced as far back as the Carboniferous or Devonian periods. After 300-400 million years of evolution, it is thought that the few species of Equisetum alive today are the sole surviving representatives of a much more diverse ancient group of species that were around before, during & after the dinosaurs.

