

Weeds in the Garden

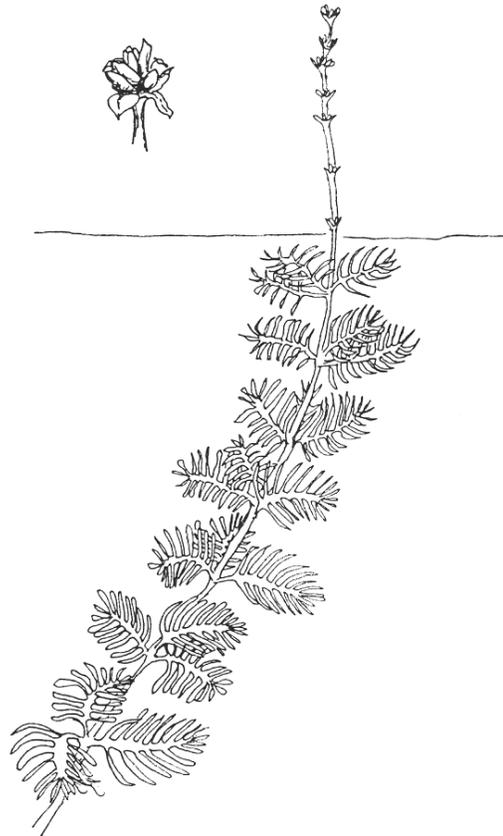
Eurasian Watermilfoil

Common Name: Eurasian watermilfoil

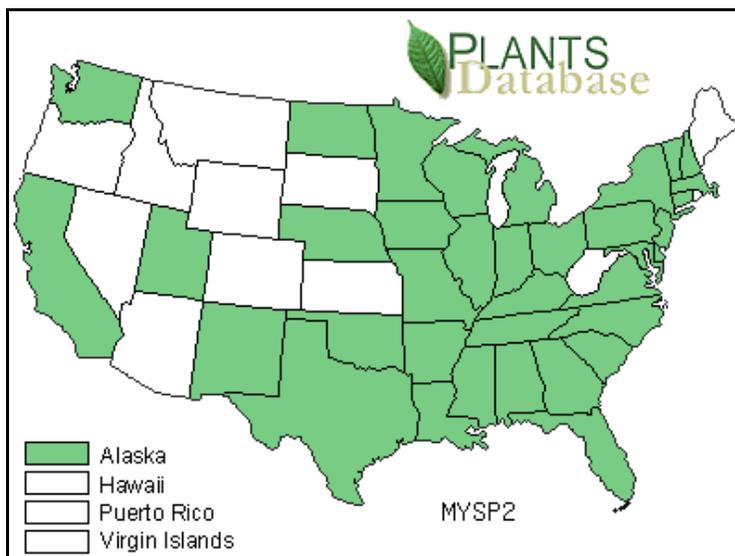
Scientific Name: *Myriophyllum spicatum*

Characteristics: Eurasian watermilfoil is a submersed aquatic plant. It forms an extensive root system and has slender stems bearing whorls of feathery leaves. The leaves are threadlike and pinnately compound. They look a bit like weather beaten feathers. Tiny flowers are bunched on emergent terminal spikes. Fruit are nut-like in shape.

“Look Alikes”: Eurasian watermilfoil resembles northern and whorled milfoils (both native species). Without fruits or flowers, it is nearly impossible to tell from northern milfoil. It can also be mistaken for “coontail” which has forked simple leaves rather than compound leaves with many leaflets.



Current Range: found throughout much of the U.S.



Origin: Eurasian watermilfoil was native to Europe, Asia and North Africa. It was first observed in the U.S. in 1942 in a pond in Washington D.C. By 1975 it was very abundant in Chesapeake Bay, the tidal Potomac River and in several Tennessee Valley reservoirs. It has primarily spread through aquarium dealers and fishermen, who inadvertently released plants or plant fragments into lakes and other water bodies.

Habitat: Eurasian watermilfoil grows best when rooted in fertile, fine textured inorganic sediments. It is often dominant in nutrient rich lakes. It prefers highly disturbed lakebeds and lakes receiving phosphorous and nitrogen runoff from the shores. High water temperatures can trigger multiple flowering.

The Problem: Eurasian watermilfoil does not depend on seeds for reproduction, but can reproduce by fragmentation of its many branches. In this way, it can be spread over long distances by currents, or attached to boats, motors, boat trailers, bilges etc. Once established it reproduces by shoot fragments, and stolons (runners that creep along lake bottom). It has another common invasive characteristic, rapid growth in early spring. This allows it to form a dense leafy canopy, shading out native species and creating monotypic stands. Heavy milfoil infestations can even reduce human uses such as swimming and boating, and industrial uses at water intakes.

Solutions:

Prevention – Boaters can greatly reduce the spread of Eurasian watermilfoil by cleaning boats and live wells. Lake users and lake associations can protect native plant bed health by reducing disturbance from boating and plant control measures such as weed harvesting. Lake groups can be particularly effective if they implement watershed management of nutrients. If Eurasian watermilfoil already exists in a lake, citizens can also monitor existing colonies to evaluate spread of these invasive plants.

Biological – One herbaceous weevil native to North America has been found to feed on Eurasian watermilfoil. This weevil is not found in large numbers in lakes at this time but research is ongoing on ways it could be used to curb invasions.

Mechanical – Use of weed cutting machines or harvesters may have temporary benefits for human uses of lakes, but in the long run may add to watermilfoil infestations by spreading cuttings and plant fragments. Weed cutting machines are most effective if used offshore where the machine has room to turn and maneuver. Inshore; hand cutting, pulling plants, or installing bottom screens is recommended. However, these methods can also impact native plants. A rule of thumb is that hand pulling is recommended for colonies under .75 acres or fewer than 100 plants. Care must be taken with plant and root fragments. Buoy's can be placed in infested areas to keep boats from crossing plants and fragmenting stems.

Chemical – These treatments are not recommended due to impacts on native species.

**For more information please contact the
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