

Native or Invasive?

Native and Invasive Aquatic Plants of the Eastern Lake Ontario Region

Invasive aquatic plants can interfere with recreation and diminish wildlife and fish habitat. Knowing some of the common plants that are native to our waters may help you spot invasive plants before they grow out of control. Read on for a sampling of our native aquatic plants, as well as some invasives to recognize.



Right: Wetland at Black Pond Wildlife Management Area, Jefferson County, NY.
Photo: Greg Chapman, New York Sea Grant

Native and invasive plants with leaves that float upon the surface of the water



White water lily
Nymphaea odorata

Native plant

Flowers: Large, white, many-petaled
Round "lily pad" leaves, 6-8 inches across

Photo: Greg Chapman, New York Sea Grant



Water chestnut
Trapa natans

Invasive plant

Triangular toothed leaves in floating "rosettes"
Seeds (nutlets) with four sharp prongs
Forms dense mats

Photo: Greg Chapman, New York Sea Grant



Yellow pond lily
Nuphar lutea

Native plant

Yellow, bulbous flowers rise above the water
Shield-shaped leaves, up to 16 inches long

Photo: Greg Chapman, New York Sea Grant



European frogbit
Hydrocharis morsus-ranae

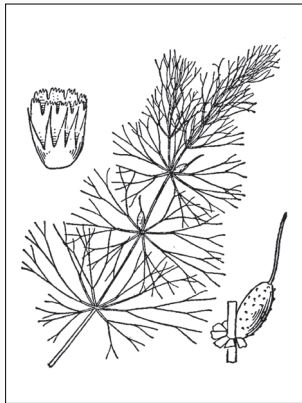
Invasive plant

Small round leaves, less than 2 inches across
Flowers: Small, white, three-petaled
Forms dense mats

Photo: Greg Chapman, New York Sea Grant

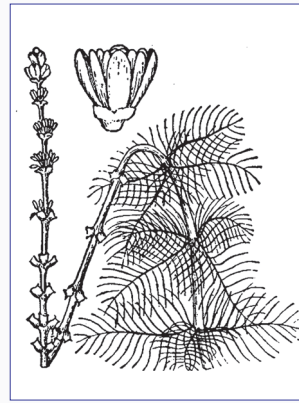
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Native and invasive plants that grow mostly beneath the water's surface



Coon's tail
Ceratophyllum demersum

Native plant
Branched, bristle-like leaves
Provides cover for fish
Eaten by some waterfowl



Eurasian watermilfoil
Myriophyllum spicatum

Invasive plant
Feather-like leaves
3-6 leaves arranged in whorls around stem
Forms dense mats that interfere with boating

Drawing: USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database / Britton, N.L., and A. Brown. 1913. An illustrated flora of the northern United States, Canada and the British Possessions. 3 vols. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York. Vol. 2: 75.

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Native and invasive plants that grow in shallow slow waters, along the shore, or in moist wetland soils



Broadleaf cattail
Typha latifolia

Native plant
Common in wetlands
Important habitat for muskrats, waterfowl and other birds, amphibians

Photo: Greg Chapman, New York Sea Grant



Common reed
Phragmites australis

Invasive plant
Tall grass with feathery seed heads
Forms dense single-species stands
Displaces native wetland plants

Photo: Greg Chapman, New York Sea Grant



Pickerelweed
Pontederia cordata

Native plant
Spikes of deep blue flowers
Lance-shaped leaves, up to 10 inches long
Seeds consumed by waterfowl

Photo: Greg Chapman, New York Sea Grant



Purple loosestrife
Lythrum salicaria

Invasive plant
Square stem; spikes of pink-purple flowers
Displaces native wetland plants
Little wildlife value

Photo: Greg Chapman, New York Sea Grant

For More Information:

Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers!
www.ProtectYourWaters.net

NYSG Aquatic Invasive Species Clearinghouse:
<http://nyis.info/ai/>