



JEFFERSON COUNTY NOXIOUS WEED CONTROL BOARD



FACT SHEET

EURASIAN WATERMILFOIL

(Myriophyllum spicatum)

- Eurasian watermilfoil is a submersed, perennial, aquatic plant.
- The leaves are arranged in groups of 4 (or occasionally 5) around the stem.
- The feather-like leaves usually have 12 or more pairs of leaflets.
- The tiny pink flowers, on reddish spikes, stand out of the water but submerge after pollination.



LOOK ALIKES:



The native **Aquatic buttercup (*Ranunculus aquatilis*)** (see drawing on left) is often mistaken for Eurasian watermilfoil. Its underwater leaves are thread-like, but the leaflets occur in bunches, not in a feather-like configuration. The flowers are white.

Northern watermilfoil (*Myriophyllum sibiricum*), is shown on the left in the picture, with Eurasian watermilfoil on the right. Northern watermilfoil leaves have fewer pairs of leaflets. There are other native milfoils and identification can be very difficult.



For more information see www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/plants/weeds

WHY BE CONCERNED?

Eurasian watermilfoil forms dense surface mats that can:

- shade out native vegetation
- offer little or no habitat or food for wildlife
- alter water quality by decreasing oxygen and increasing temperature
- interfere with boating and swimming
- clog water intake pipes
- create stagnant water which encourages mosquitoes to breed.

Control of Eurasian watermilfoil costs the State of Washington \$1,000,000 per year.

Eurasian watermilfoil is a Class B designate weed. Control is required in Jefferson County.

ECOLOGY:

- Eurasian watermilfoil is normally a submersed, aquatic plant, rooted in the substrate. However, if water evaporates slowly and plants become stranded, it can develop a land form.
- Seeds rarely produce seedlings and are not a common means of reproduction.
- Reproduction occurs when plant fragments break off automatically in the fall or are broken off by human activity. Fragments often develop roots before separating from the parent plant, and a small piece of stem or root can grow into a whole new plant. **Fragments are often carried on boats or trailers and moved between water bodies.**

CONTROL

Prevention and early detection are the best means of control!

- **Clean** boats and trailers thoroughly when moving between water bodies.
- **Monitor** water bodies frequently; look for floating fragments as well as rooted plants.
- **Bring** in all suspicious-looking plants for positive identification

COVERING milfoil with an opaque fabric, such as burlap, can effectively control small populations.

HANDPULLING (similar to pulling weeds out of a garden) can be used as a control measure where possible. **Always collect and dispose of plant fragments.**

RAKING with a rake attached to a rope may reduce plant density, but will probably not remove the root mass. This method is not allowed in certain lakes, because of potential impact to sockeye spawning areas. **Carefully gather and remove any plant fragments created.**

LOWERING the water level can desiccate plants in dry climates, or kill them if temperatures fall below freezing for a prolonged period of time.

CUTTING, HARVESTING AND UNDERWATER ROTOTILLING, can create open areas of water. However, each of these methods creates fragments which may increase the spread of milfoil. Washington state law requires that cut plants be removed from the water.

BIOLOGICAL CONTROL:

- Several insects are being tested for use in controlling Eurasian watermilfoil.
- Research is underway on plant pathogens that will control Eurasian watermilfoil.
- Triploid grass carp will eat Eurasian water milfoil, but may prefer other vegetation.

HERBICIDE applications near or over water require a specially licensed applicator and a permit; however, a permit may not be required for ponds that are smaller than one acre and are completely enclosed with no outlet to other water bodies. Ask the Weed Board if you have questions about herbicide use.