

# European Water Chestnut

*Trapa natans*



## What is it and Why is it a Problem?

European Water Chestnut is a rooted or floating aquatic plant that forms vast dense mats in lakes, ponds, rivers and streams with soft substrate. It tends to shade out native vegetation, and also consumes large amounts of dissolved oxygen from the water when it dies and decomposes. It interferes with recreational activities such as swimming, boating and fishing, and disrupts flow in canals. In addition, it produces spiky chestnuts which can wash up along the beach and be painful if stepped on. European Water Chestnut has been found in areas surrounding Lake Ontario, particularly near Kingston, as well as areas along the Saint Lawrence River, Rideau Canal and Ottawa River. Although European Water Chestnut has yet to be reported in The Land Between, it is located in surrounding areas and thus may potentially spread to the region if careful precautions are not taken.



## What Does it Look Like?

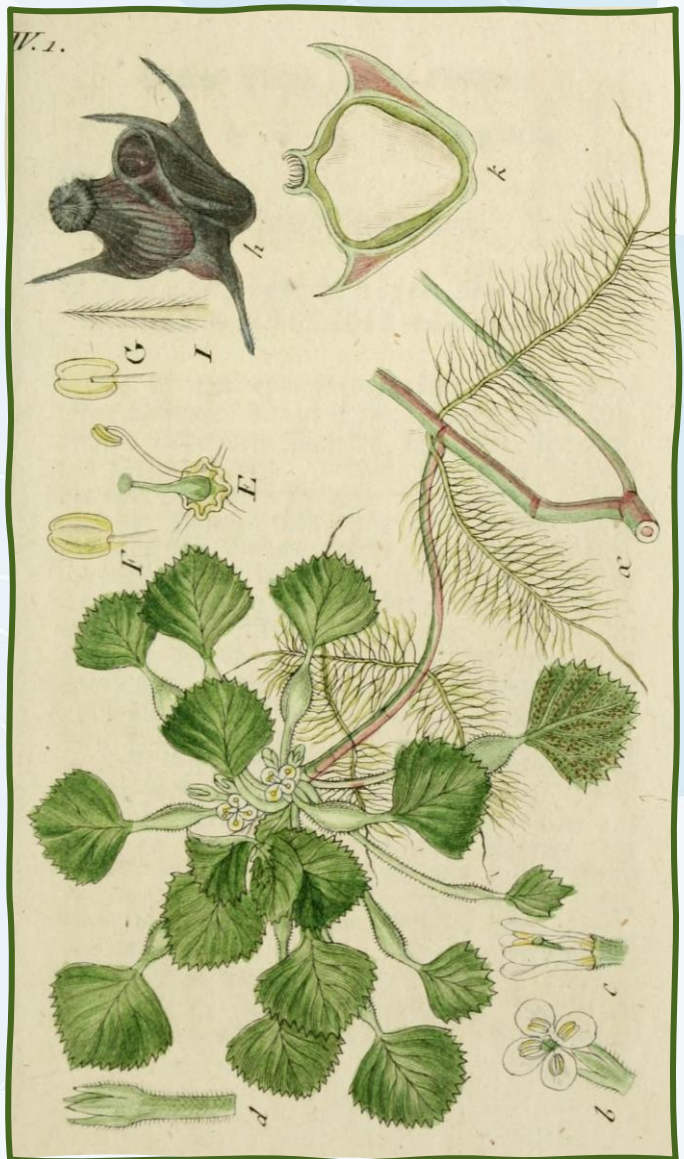
- Leaves that are floating are leathery, bright to dark green, grow up to 5 cm wide, are fan-shaped with sharply toothed edges, and form a rosette up to 30 cm wide
- Leaves that are submerged are feathery with many small leaf segments
- Flowers are white and very small (8 mm long) with four petals
- Produces a hard chestnut about 3 - 4 cm wide with sharp barbed spines (viable form is fleshy green and sinks, whereas the non-viable older form is black, floating and has four sharp barbed spines)
- Note that these water chestnuts ARE NOT edible





## How Can it be Managed?

- Report sightings of any invasive species online through [EDDMapS Ontario](#), a web-based mapping system which also has an app, or through the [Invasive Species in Ontario](#) project on [iNaturalist.org](#).
- Learn how to identify it so you can avoid accidentally spreading it with your fishing gear and equipment. Inspect your boat, trailer and fishing gear before leaving a fishing spot and before heading to a new fishing spot to remove any mud and plant fragments. Refer to the [OMNRF's Boater's Action Plan](#) for more information on cleaning your boat and gear.
- Avoid boating near known Water Lettuce infestations and reduce your speed. Propellers can cut off pieces of the plant and spread them to new areas.
- Do not buy, sell or plant European Water Chestnut for watergarden use - it is illegal to do so in Ontario. Ensure that you only plant native plants in your garden or pond. You can refer to the [Grow me instead: Guide to Planting Native Plants in Southern Ontario](#) to determine what native aquatic plants to use instead. Oftentimes invasive aquatic plants end up reaching water bodies when people dispose of their unwanted aquarium or water garden plants. The correct way to dispose of unwanted aquatic plants is to donate them or throw them in the garbage. They can also be composted or mulched 30 m or more away from a watercourse on land.



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## References

[Invasive Aquatic Plant Species: A Quick Reference Guide](#), produced by Ontario's Invading Species Awareness Program and Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters

[Great Lakes Nonindigenous Species Information System](#), produced by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[Grow Me Instead \(Southern Ontario\) Brochure](#), produced by the Ontario Invasive Plant Council

[Ontario Invading Species Awareness Program](#), developed by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNR), and the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters (OFAH).

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