

Water Hyacinth

Pontederia crassipes



What is it and Why is it a Problem?

Water Hyacinth is a floating aquatic plant that grows rapidly to create continuous dense mats in ponds, rivers and lakes. It outcompetes native vegetation for sunlight, nutrients and space, and also reduces dissolved oxygen content in the water which negatively impacts invertebrates and fish. It also interferes with water flow and creates stagnant water which is preferred by mosquitoes. Finally, it disrupts recreational activities such as swimming, boating and fishing.



What Does it Look Like?

- Leaves are arranged in a circular form and can either be floating at the surface or sticking out of the water (emergent)
- Leaves are egg-shaped to round, thick, glossy and bright green in colour
- Roots are dark purple/black
- Flowers have 6 blue-violet petals with one being darker in colour with a yellow spot, and are arranged in clusters of 4 - 15 flowers in the middle of the plant
- Fruit is in the form of a capsule that contains many seeds
- Individual plants are often connected via stolons under the water



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 while fishing. Inspect your boat, trailer and fishing gear before leaving a fishing spot and/or heading to a one to remove any mud and plant fragments. Refer to [OMNRF's Boater's Action Plan](#) for more information on cleaning your boat and gear.
- Avoid boating near known infestations and reduce your speed. Propellers can cut off plant pieces and spread them to new areas.
- If you are considering removing invasive aquatic plants, ensure you follow [OMNRF's rules](#) regarding removal - the beds of most Ontario water bodies are Crown Land.
- Water Hyacinth is readily available as an ornamental plant and is unregulated in Ontario. To avoid the spread, do not buy, sell or plant it for water garden use. Ensure that you only plant native plants in your garden/pond - Pickerelweed and Common Arrowhead are good native alternatives. 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.

References

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

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

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