

Native
Submergent
Aquatic
Plant

COMMON WATERWEED

Elodea canadensis



About

Common Waterweed is a name that gives this species a bad reputation. This native species is far from *weedy* as it provides countless benefits for our local ecosystems. You'll find this plant in eutrophic lakes, completely underwater. It thrives in calm water along shallow shorelines of lakes and rivers. Interestingly enough, it is one of few species that can grow in depths of water greater than 10 meters.



Identification

- Grows up to 6 meters long
- Individual leaves grow up to 1.5 cm, in whorled groupings of 3
- Leaves are dark green in colour
- Leaves are toothed but only visible if magnified
- Flowers are small and pale-pink in colour that float on the surface of water
- Typically rooted in the lake substrate or soil
- Leaves are compacted near the tip and spaced apart further down the stem

References

Photo 2 by Juha Tuomola via iNaturalist

Photo 2 by [guzenezakharov](#) via iNaturalist

Hydrilla produced by the [Government of Ontario](#)

Elodea canadensis developed by [K.W. Spicer and P.M. Catling](#)

Grow me instead produced by [Ontario Invasive Plant Council](#)

Elodea canadensis by [Missouri Botanical Garden](#)

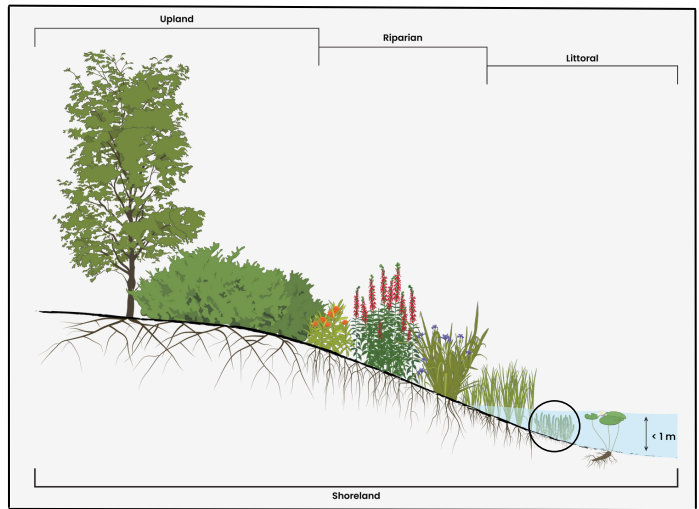
Identification, Biology and Management of *Elodea canadensis* developed by

[K.H. Bowmer, S.W.I. Jacobs and G.R. Sainty](#)



Where is this species found in the shoreland?

Common Waterweed is found in the littoral zone of the shoreland, as shown in the diagram. It thrives in depths between 1 - 8 meters deep.



Did you know that *Elodea canadensis* is commonly used in ponds and aquariums? This species is a useful oxygenator for fish. It also controls algae by absorbing nutrients and clearing murky water for fish viewing!



Benefits

- Improves water quality and increases dissolved oxygen content
- Provides habitat and food for fish, small crustaceans, insect larvae and snails
- One of the few aquatic plants that provides underwater habitat during winter months
- Stabilizes shorelines and reduces erosion



Don't weed me!

As we know, Common Waterweed is a native species within Ontario. It is important to recognize and identify native species from invasives. For example, Hydrilla, an invasive species, closely resembles *Elodea canadensis*. There are currently no **documented** populations of Hydrilla in Ontario, but it is possible that there are unknown colonies. Hydrilla can be distinguished by the presence of prickly hairs on lower leaf surfaces, as well as sharp teeth on leaf edges.