

Native
Aquatic
Submerged
Plant

COONTAIL

Ceratophyllum demersum



About

The leaves of Coontail have a strong resemblance to a racoon's tail, where it likely got its name from! This submerged species is free floating with no roots. You'll likely find Coontail in lakes, streams, and marshes with moderate to high nutrient levels. This species will tolerate various conditions such as low light and cool water. Coontail has been studied for its bioremediation properties, and is known to clean contaminated waters!



Identification

- No roots, but does have coarse, branching stems
- Grows up to 5 - 6 meters in height
- Leaves get denser at the end of the stem
- Branches at right angles, where the stems have whorls of 5 - 14 divided leaves
- Leaves reach 1 - 4 cm in length and are medium to dark green in colour
- Produces separate male and female flowers on the same plant that grow to 2 mm in length
- Flowers are pink or yellow in colour

References

Photo 1 by Caleb Catto via iNaturalist

Photo 2 by Nikolay Panasenkov via iNaturalist

Photo 3 by Eduard Garin via iNaturalist

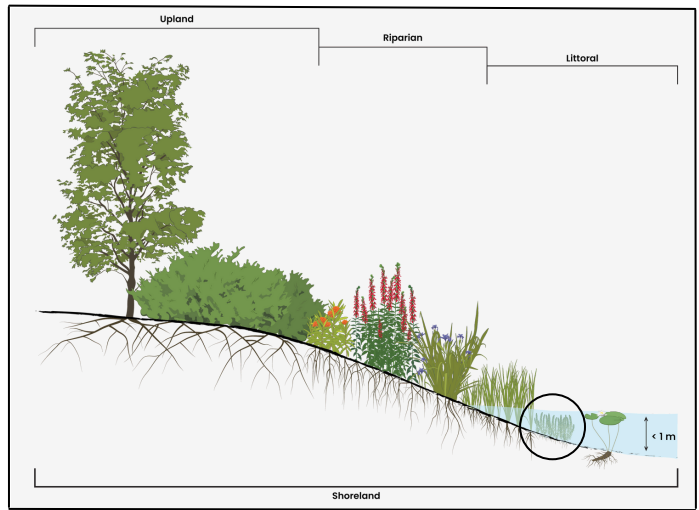
Coontail *Ceratophyllum demersum* developed by Chesapeake Bay Program

Eurasian watermilfoil produced by the University of Florida



Where is this species found in the shoreland?

Ceratophyllum demersum is found in the littoral zone of the shoreland, as shown in the diagram. It thrives in water up to 3 meters deep.



Did you know that *Ceratophyllum demersum* is allelopathic? This refers to plants that produce compounds or chemicals that inhibit the growth of nearby plants. Therefore, Coontail has a significant competitive advantage over surrounding species!



Benefits

- Creates habitat for aquatic organisms such as macroinvertebrates and fish
- Acts as a fish nursery by providing cover for young fish to protect against predators
- Food source for Snapping and Blanding's turtle, which are both species at-risk
- Improves water quality by absorbing nutrients such as heavy metals



Don't weed me!

Coontail may *look* like a weed from afar, but we now know that it is a native species. It is important to differentiate Coontail from invasive look alikes such as Eurasian watermilfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*). Coontail leaves are toothed and feel rough when pulled through the hand, whereas Eurasian watermilfoil leaves feel smooth and are not toothed. Leaflets of Eurasian watermilfoil are limp when removed from the water, whereas Coontail leaves keep their shape.