



COMMON WATERWEED

Elodea canadensis



Common waterweed is one of the most common native aquatic plants in Lake Champlain. It's important food and habitat for a variety of wildlife.

Characteristics:

Vegetative

- Leaf type: Tiny and narrow, not divided but made up of one segment.
- Leaf shape: Linear to oval.
- Leaf arrangement: Occur in whorls of 3 at stem nodes that become more crowded at the top.
- Leaf position: Submerged underwater.

Flower

- Number of petals/sepals: 3 petals.
- Color: White.
- Attachment: Fruit: dry and splits open when ripe.

Seed

- Produced in a cylindrical capsule that contains many seeds.

Habitat Preference

Shallow lakes, ponds, pools, ditches and streams with slow moving water.

Tends to prefer loamy soil, slow-moving water with high Nitrogen and Phosphorus concentrations.





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Cultural History Notes

- Commonly used in schools as an experimental plant for demonstrating cellular structures, such as chloroplasts and nuclei, and oxygen production during photosynthesis.
- Used as aquarium plants, where their fast growth and high oxygen production can contribute to the health of aquarium systems.

Ecological Contributions to Lake Champlain

Biological

- Provides food for waterfowl, beavers, and muskrats. One of the few aquatic plants that provides underwater habitat during the winter months.

Chemical

- Often overwinters as an evergreen plant. Photosynthesis continues at a reduced rate under ice.

Physical

- Provides habitat for many aquatic invertebrates as well as cover for young fish and amphibians (also provides cover during winter months).

Similar Species

Brazilian waterweed (*Egeria densa*)

- Aquatic invasive plant not detected in Lake Champlain as of 2024, but present in other Vermont and New York waterways.
- Can reduce the abundance and diversity of native plant seeds in lake bottoms due to increased sediment accumulation under its weed beds.

BRAZILLIAN WATERWEED



Photo from Wikimedia Commons

COMMON WATERWEED



Photo from Vermont Dept. of Environmental Conservation

How to differentiate common waterweed and Brazilian waterweed

- Brazilian waterweed stems look very leafy compared to those of the common waterweed.
- Common waterweed has only 3 leaves in a whorl, instead of 4-8 like egeria.

Scan to learn more about Lake Champlain's native aquatic plants!



The Lake Champlain Committee is a watershed-based nonprofit that uses science-based advocacy, education, and collaborative action to protect and restore water quality, safeguard natural habitats and ensure recreational access in the Lake Champlain Basin.



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