



NORTHERN WILD RICE

Zizania palustris

Also called manoomin, Canada rice, and water oats



Zizania palustris is a robust, native, aquatic, annual grass that produces large grains. The plants grow in shallow water in small lakes and slow-flowing streams; often, only the flowering head of wild rice rises above the water. The grain is eaten by dabbling ducks and other aquatic wildlife. The grain was historically and is still gathered and eaten throughout North America

Habitat Preference

Brackish or salt marshes and flats, fresh tidal marshes or flats, in lakes or ponds, rivers or streams and along the shores of rivers or lakes.

Characteristics:

Vegetative

- Leaf type: flat, hairless, and rough textured around the edges.
- Leaf shape: blades/strap-like (3-4 feet long).
- Leaf arrangement: alternate leaves and basal (grows lowest on the stem of a plant or flower).
- Leaf position: basal attachment.

Flower

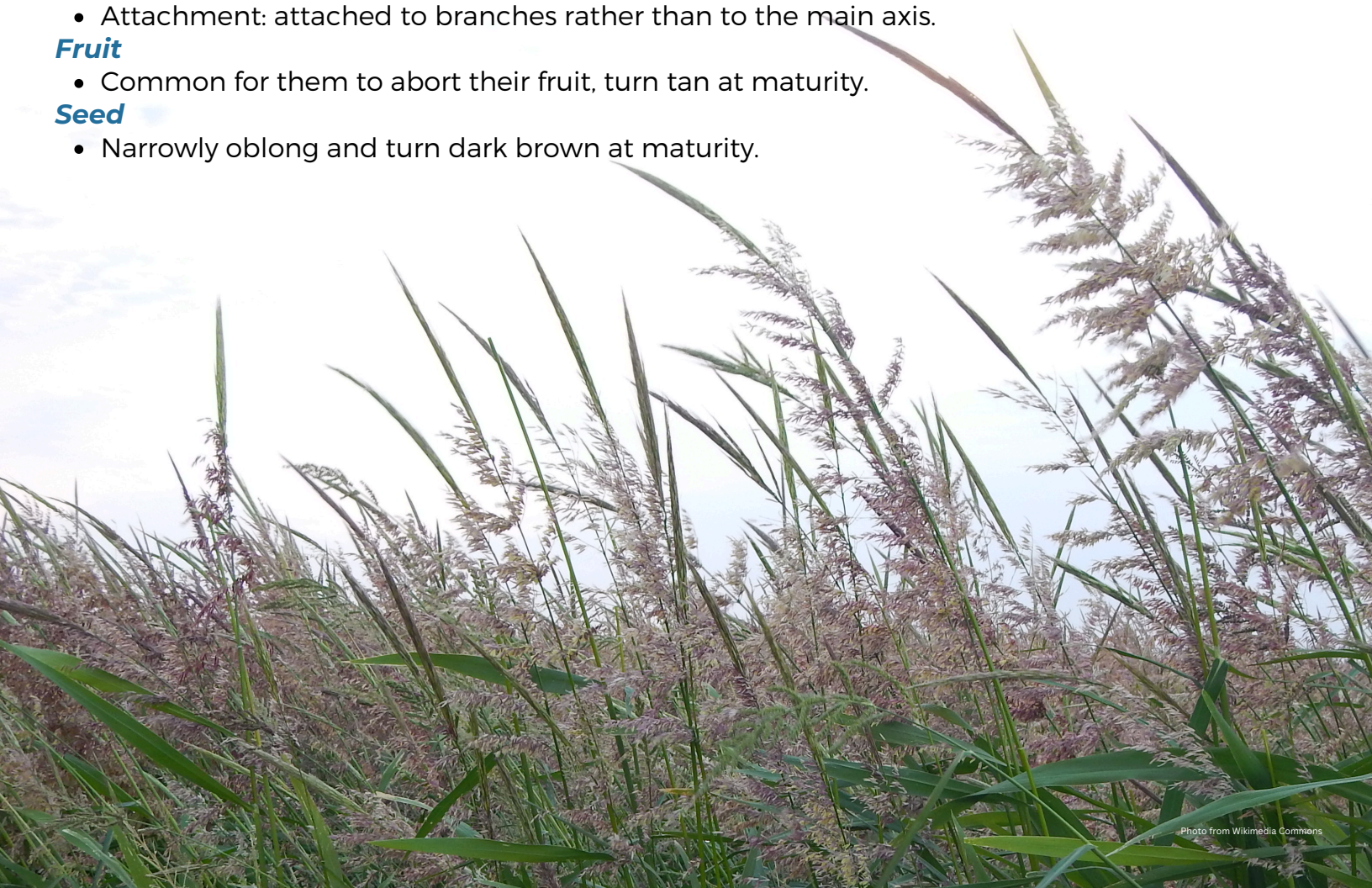
- Number of petals/sepals: 2 (pair of bracts).
- Color: straw colored to purple.
- Attachment: attached to branches rather than to the main axis.

Fruit

- Common for them to abort their fruit, turn tan at maturity.

Seed

- Narrowly oblong and turn dark brown at maturity.





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ZIZANIA PALUSTRIS

CULTURAL HISTORY NOTES

An important staple food in Native American different tribes across North America (particularly around the Great Lakes) as either rice or ground into a meal.

Ecological Contributions to Lake Champlain

Biological

- Valued food source and nesting habitat for waterfowl.

Chemical

- Rich source of riboflavin and niacin, making it a nutritious food for wildlife and humans alike.

Physical:

- Tends to grow further away from the shore than other aquatic grasses, in depths of up to five feet, providing habitat for small fish and microorganisms.

SIMILAR SPECIES

Common reed (*Phragmites australis*)

- Highly invasive plant that colonizes wetlands, roadsides, and disturbed areas.
- Difficult to eradicate, and tends to emerge earlier and be less susceptible to herbivory than native strains.



COMMON REED



NORTHERN WILD RICE

How to differentiate common reed and northern wild rice

- Common reed has deeper, more fast-growing roots that allow it to overtake native species like northern wild rice.
- Common reed is 15-20 feet high, while northern wild rice grows to 3-9 feet.
- Generally, common reeds grow in wetland soils while northern wild rice grow in depths of up to 5 feet of water.

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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