



Ever since last October we have covered invasive species in our lakes and wetlands in this column with other subjects from time to time. We started with the fish and covered 10 invasive fish species, then two pathogens (viral and fungal), parasitoids and invertebrates (six in all) which now brings us to plants. Plants can be serious invasive growing very fast due to phosphorus loading and forming large stands that choke waterways. These usually wash ashore due to wave action and litter the shorelines in what people incorrectly call seaweed. This first species is usually found in the largest percentage in these “seaweed” piles.

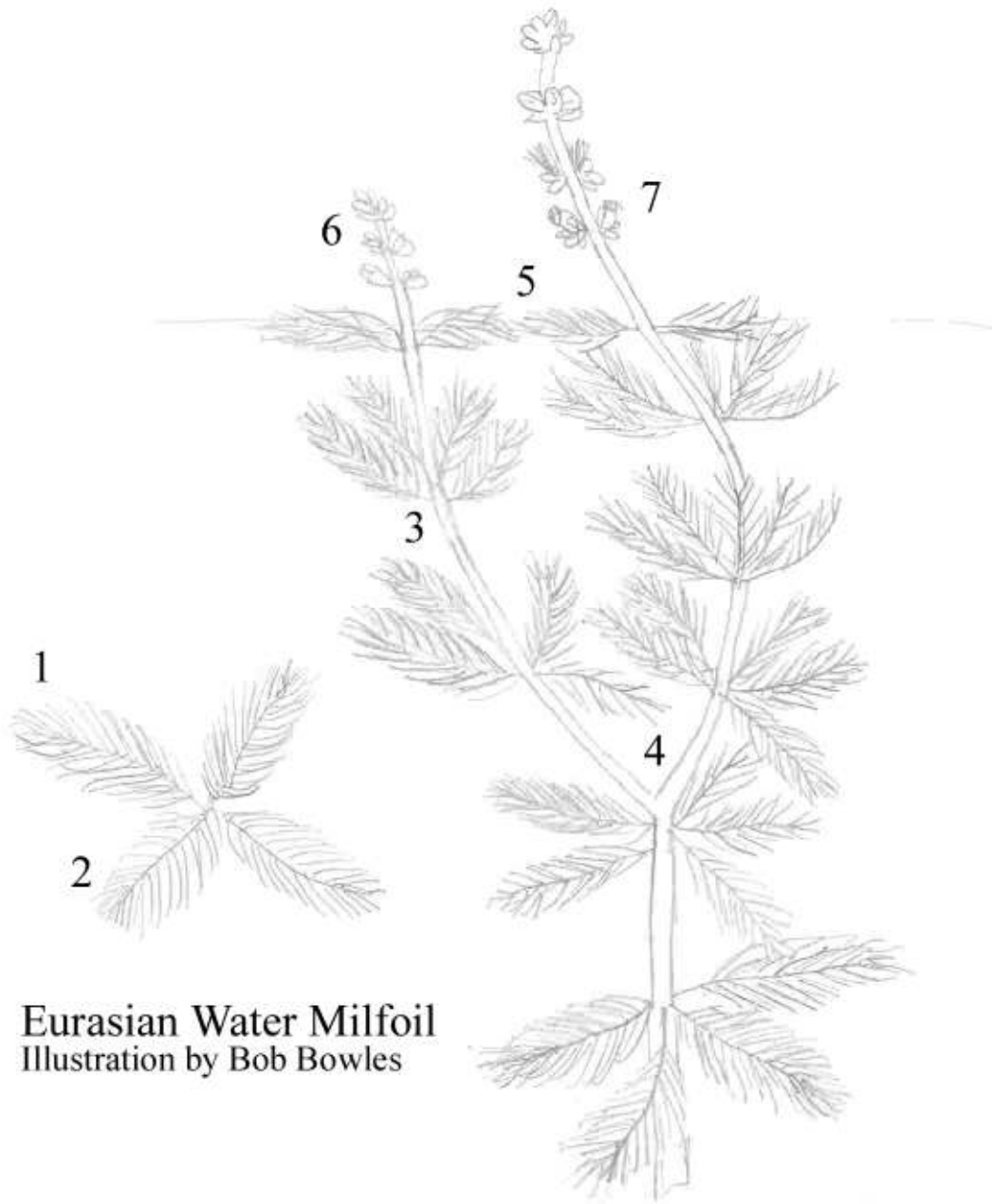
Eurasian Watermilfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*)

Eurasian watermilfoil is an aggressive submerged aquatic plant native to Europe, Asia and North Africa that has become one of the most widely distributed non-native aquatic plant species in North America. It was introduced to North America in the late 1800s but was not positively identified until 1942 in Washington D.C. Since that time, Eurasian milfoil has become the most widely distributed invasive aquatic plant species. It has now been confirmed in the provinces of Ontario, Quebec and British Columbia and is confirmed in 45 states in the United States. It is found from Greenland to Florida, demonstrating its adaptability and potential to spread. Eurasian watermilfoil lives submerged in water and rooted to the bottom of waterways. It has long narrow leaves arranged in whorls of 4-5 around the stem that gives it a feathery appearance. It looks very similar to the native Northern milfoil which usually has 5-9 leaflets but it has 12-21 leaflets. It can also grow in greater depths of up to 10m (33') but is usually found in depths of .5-3.5m (1.6-11.5'). This plant can grow even clear, turbid and even contaminated water, still or moving and survive in a pH range of 5.4 to 11. It thrives in disturbed areas where human activity has altered the environment.

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Identification from illustration of Eurasian Water Milfoil

- 1/ 3 to 5 feathery leaves arranged in whorls around the stem.
- 2/ Each leaf with 12 to 21 leaflet pairs.
- 3/ Long, stringy stems.
- 4/ Stems branching near water surface.
- 5/ Stems and leafs floating at water surface forming dense mats.
- 6/ Flower spike erect above water surface.
- 7/ Upper portion of plant frequently develops a reddish cast.



Eurasian Water Milfoil
Illustration by Bob Bowles