

## **Eurasian Milfoil: An Invasive Aquatic Plant**

*Myriophyllum spicatum*

Common Name: Eurasian watermilfoil, spiked watermilfoil

### **Biology**

Eurasian milfoil is a submersed, rooted perennial plant, which grows to lengths of up to twenty feet. Its whitish-pink or reddish-brown stem serves as a central axis to soft, feather-like leaves. Arranged in whorls of three to six leaves around the stem, each mature submerged leaf has around twelve to twenty blunt, slender segments on each side of the axis. Flowering occurs in late July to early August, creating very small, reddish flowers on an emerged 8-in spike. Fertilized flowers produce small (2-3mm), four-lobed, globular fruit called “nutlets.”

### **Reproduction**

Eurasian milfoil can reproduce asexually by vegetative reproduction and sexually by seed formation. Of the two, vegetative reproduction is more common. It occurs by fragmentation, which allows this species to re-sprout and grow into new plants. Although less common, seed formation produces viable seeds, which remain dormant in the sediment for long periods of time.

### **Habitat**

Believed to originate from Europe, this species has invaded most US states, excluding Montana and Wyoming. Eurasian milfoil is a generalist species; therefore, it has a wide range of environmental tolerances. It is commonly found in lakes, ponds, and slow-moving streams, but it has also been found in fast-moving waters. It tolerates water conditions ranging from fresh spring water to brackish creeks and bays. Nearly unaffected by temperature gradients, this aquatic plant is “cold-hardy” and can overwinter in frozen lakes and ponds.

### **Impacts and Threats Posed by Eurasian Milfoil**

The extremely dense mats formed by Eurasian milfoil shades out native vegetation, resulting in the reduction of the local biodiversity. Additionally, these dense stands negatively impact bird and fish habitat by altering the temperature profile, pH, and oxygen levels of an invaded waterbody. Furthermore, invasions impose limitations on water use for recreational purposes, such as boating and fishing, which leads to negative impacts on real estate values and tourism.

## Management Methods

General management methods include:

- mechanical harvesting
- drawdowns
- biocontrol
- hand harvesting
- suction harvesting
- benthic barrier
- herbicides

## Literature Cited

1. <http://plants.ifas.ufl.edu/node/278>
2. <http://www.mass.gov/dcr/waterSupply/lakepond/factsheet/Eurasian%20Milfoil.pdf>
3. <http://nbii-nin.ciesin.columbia.edu/ipane/icat/browse.do?specieId=78#repro>