

# Eurasian watermilfoil

(*Myriophyllum spicatum*)

Low priority AIS present in  
Lower Wisconsin River basin

## What is it?

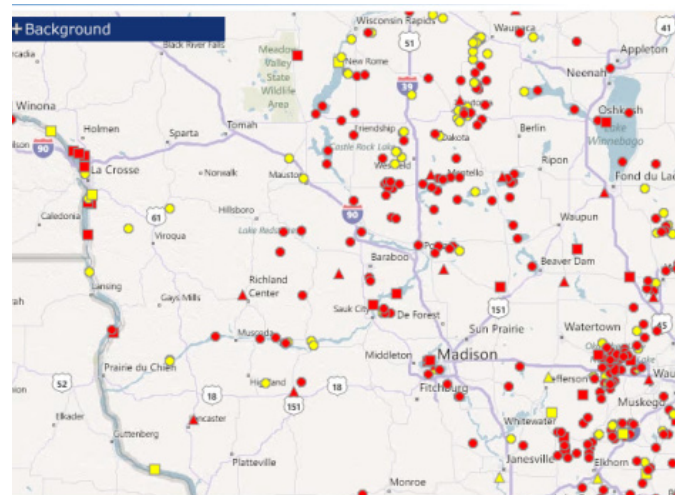
Eurasian watermilfoil is an aquatic plant. Its stems tend to be limp, and may show a pinkish-red color. The leaves are typically divided into 12 or more pairs of threadlike leaflets. The most common native watermilfoil, northern watermilfoil, tends to have whitish or brownish stems, and leaves that divide into fewer than 10 pairs of leaflets.

## Where is it?

Eurasian watermilfoil is one of the most widely distributed invasive aquatic plants, confirmed in 45 U.S. states, and in the Canadian provinces of British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec. It was first documented in the Lower Wisconsin River basin in 1965 in Avoca Lake. It has been found in 22 of the 100 Lower Wisconsin River floodplain lakes surveyed and other heavily visited nearby lakes, including White Mound Lake, Cox Hollow Lake, the Yahara chain of lakes in Madison, Devil's Lake, Lake Wisconsin, and Lake Delton.

## How does it spread?

Eurasian watermilfoil was probably intentionally introduced to the United States. After being planted in waterbodies around the continent, its spread continued naturally as pieces of it were disseminated in flow and by motorboat traffic. Today, transport on boating equipment plays the largest role in introducing fragments to new waterbodies. It continues to spread through the aquarium and water garden trades as well.



Distribution of Eurasian watermilfoil in southern Wisconsin. Red=established population, yellow=specimen(s) collected. (USGS, 2011)

## Why do we care?

Eurasian watermilfoil competes aggressively to displace and reduce the diversity of native aquatic plants, and it has less value as a food source for waterfowl than the native plants it replaces. The growth and vigor of warmwater fisheries can be harmed by the presence of dense Eurasian watermilfoil cover. Specifically, the growth of thick vegetation degrades water quality and depletes dissolved oxygen levels. Eurasian watermilfoil has also played a role in the spread of the invasive zebra and quagga mussels. Zebra mussels have been found attached to watermilfoil being transported on the trailers of recreational boaters from one waterbody to another.

## What can we do?

Eradication is most likely impossible. Currently, herbicides or mechanical harvesting are most often used to control watermilfoil infestations. Small Eurasian watermilfoil infestations can be hand pulled. Drawdown of water levels may be another feasible option on impounded bodies of water. Biocontrol is not currently an option in flowing systems. The best defense against Eurasian watermilfoil is to ensure that waterbodies are not heavily impacted by nutrient pollution, and that native plants aren't removed (which occurs in the presence of voracious omnivores, such as the grass carp), and to minimize hydrologic disturbances.

## STOP AQUATIC HITCHHIKERS!

### Wisconsin law requires you to:

- **Inspect** boats, trailers, and equipment.
- **Remove** all attached aquatic plants and animals.
- **Drain** all water from boats, vehicles and equipment.
- **Never move** plants or live fish away from a waterbody.

If you suspect that you have found an invasive species call 1-888-WDNR-INFO (1-888-936-7463) to report it.



Eurasian watermilfoil (Graves Lovell)