Eurasian Watermilfoil Alert

EURASIAN WATERMILFOIL

Eurasian Watermilfoil (Myriophyllum spicatum L.) is a foreign weed species and has no natural controls on its explosive growth. Once it becomes established, Eurasian Watermilfoil can completely infest a water body. There are several species of Milfoil native to North America. Unlike Eurasian Watermilfoil, however, they rarely attain such explosive and extensive population growth. Eurasian Watermilfoil will grow in nearly any type of water environment. Water quality and other stresses also play a major role in susceptibility to Eurasian Watermilfoil.

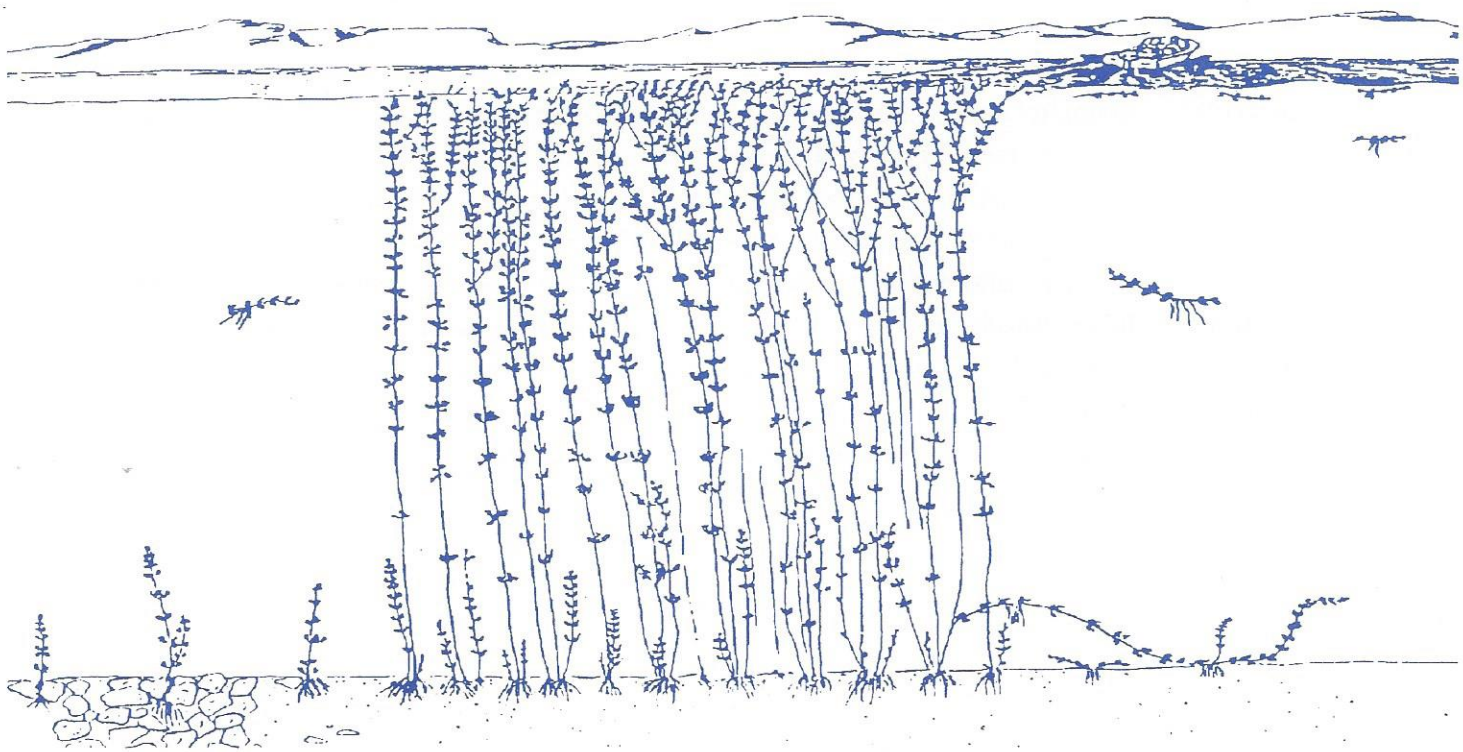
EFFECTS OF EURASIAN WATERMILFOIL INFESTATION

Eurasian Watermilfoil competes with and crowds out more beneficial native plants. This aquatic weed grows in extremely dense stands resulting in poor spawning habitats and stunted fish growth. These plants have no known value as a food source. Eurasian Watermilfoil severely threatens natural lake environments. The explosive weed growth discourages boating, swimming, fishing, and other recreational activities.

REPRODUCTION

Eurasian Watermilfoil usually reproduces by the breaking off, drifting, and resprouting of plant shoots, although germination from a nut-like fruit is also possible. This fragmentation and subsequent reproduction occurs both naturally and as a result of human activity, such as boating. A shoot fragment only a few inches long is capable of producing a whole new plant, therefore, Eurasian Watermilfoil is easily spread from one area to another by currents, wildlife, and people.

Cross sectional view of a Eurasian Watermilfoil weed bed



Weed growth is enhanced by the addition of nutrients and sediment to the water body.

Identification of Eurasian Watermilfoil

- **Roots to bottom of water body**
- **May grow in water up to 30 feet deep**
- **Grows mainly within 3 to 12 feet of the surface**
- **Primary habitat (most dense) in shallow edges of lakes or gradually sloping shores of other water bodies**
- **Often forms dense mats at the water surface**
- **Stem branches several times near the top**
- **Stem branches may grow up to 30 feet long**
- **Leaves are formed by 12 to 24 threadlike leaflets**
- **Leaves are organized in whorls around stem in groups of 3 or 4**
- **Uppermost leaves have a reddish tint**
- **Leaves collapse around stem when the stalk is removed from the water**
- **Flowers have 4 petals in whorls**
- **Flower stalk may emerge above water surface**
- **Flowers produce a 1/10 inch spherical fruit**

There is no method that completely eradicates Eurasian Watermilfoil from a water body, however, various control methods may be employed. Some of these methods include: hand pulling, chemical control, biological control, machine harvesting, bottom screening, and dredging. These weeds are more difficult to remove as they mature, therefore plants should be removed as soon as possible.

The addition of excess nutrients and sediments into the water encourages the growth of Eurasian Watermilfoil in our lakes, ponds, and rivers. An integral part of the strategy to contain Eurasian Watermilfoil is to limit the addition of nutrients to the water body. Excess nutrients added to the watershed (all of the land that contributes runoff to the water body) contribute to weed and algae growth. Improved sanitary sewage treatment, effective storm water controls, and reduced nonpoint source pollution are strong deterrents to Eurasian Watermilfoil infestation.

For more information or other aquatic weed information sheets, contact:

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