Invasive Plants of the Future

Nipping 'Em in the Bud…

The next weed invasion in Wisconsin could be coming to a roadside, park or natural area near YOU!

Dozens of well-known invasive species already have run wild on private and public lands and waters across the state, and efforts to control them can be costly. Warning: NEW invasive plants are on the way—ones likely to cause serious ecological damage in Wisconsin, as they have in other states.

WE NEED YOUR HELP to spot these new trouble-makers and stop their spread *before* they become destructive, permanent residents. This brochure provides you with:

- **Photos of target invasive plants**
- **Plant control methods**
- **Instructions for reporting findings**
- **An invitation to be a Wisconsin Weed Watcher**

Sponsored by
WISCONSIN INVASIVE PLANTS
REPORTING AND PREVENTION PROJECT
An early detection and strategic response initiative
http://dnr.wi.gov/invasives/futureplants

What are "Invasives of the Future?"

If we knew then what we know now…

Over the past 150 years, many non-native weeds have taken up residence in Wisconsin. Many were brought intentionally, but most were unintended guests that now are here to stay. A growing number of weeds have proven to be especially troublesome and "invasive;" they rapidly colonize natural habitats—woods, prairies, wetlands and waters—crowding out valuable native plants.

The plants in this brochure are known to be highly invasive in other states and provinces—and are the ones most likely to invade Wisconsin in the future. If we can locate, then eradicate or contain them before they become unstoppable, we can potentially save countless hours of work and millions of dollars in control costs.

The "Target Invasive Plants" on the following pages are either 1) already in the state, but in localized populations, or 2) as of this printing, not known to be here—yet—but are capable of thriving in part or all of the state.

Above: a roadside infestation.
Right: flowers, maturing seed cluster, and ripe clinging seeds.

With your help, we have a chance to stop invaders like this Japanese Hedge-parsley (*Torilis japonica*)

The Wisconsin Invasive Plants Reporting and Prevention Project has three main goals:

- **Identify and report** populations of target invasive species
- **Eliminate or contain** those populations before they spread
- **Coordinate** long-term monitoring of occurrence sites

The first step is to become familiar with these "new" invasives. Use this brochure as a field guide and ***let us know which ones you find.***

Target Invasive Species

Weeds to Watch For…

[WI] = Already in Wisconsin

Upland Page

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The following pages contain photos and details on each plant.

More photos (including look-alikes) and information are available at **http://dnr.wi.gov/invasives/futureplants**

Cut-leaved Teasel
Coming soon
to a greenspace near you!

Common Teasel
Dipsacus fullonum subsp. *sylvestris*
Cut-leaved Teasel
Dipsacus laciniatus

Description
Teasels are monocarpic perennials (meaning they flower once, then die). Seeds produce a ground-level rosette the first year, then send up a flowering stalk usually in the second or third year. As rosettes, teasels develop a large taproot and oblong, wrinkled, prickly leaves with a whitish midrib. On flowering plants, leaves are opposite, stemless and prickly along the lower midrib. Flowering stems are ridged, quite spiny and 4 to 7 feet tall. Teasel's large, spiny oval-shaped flowering head is distinctive.

Common teasel leaves are long and taper to a point, but usually are not lobed. Lower leaves may be joined into cups around the stem. It typically has purple or pink flowers, with spiny bracts curving up from below, and extending above, the flower head. It blossoms June–October.

Cut-leaved teasel leaves are long and deeply cut, and pairs of leaves join to form cups at nodes along the stem. It usually has white flowers, with spiny bracts that are shorter than the flower head. It blossoms July–September.

Look-alikes
As a rosette and before flowering, teasel may resemble chicory *(Cichorium intybus)* and some thistles (*Carduus* spp., *Cirsium* spp.). Chicory has no spines or prickles. In thistles, leaf edges have spines; leaf edges of teasel are spineless.

Habits & habitats
Both teasels originated in Europe and now are present in southern Wisconsin. In recent years, colonies have spread rapidly especially along highways where seeds are dispersed by mowing equipment. Teasel can form extensive monocultures and prefers open, sunny habitats including prairies, seeps and sedge meadows where it can become a severe threat to native plants.

Control
Mechanical: The taproots of rosettes can be dug out of the ground like a dandelion, but remaining root fragments might resprout. Cutting is most effective between full bud stage and flowering. If timed right, the plant will not flower again and will die at the end of the season. Controlled burns in late spring can be effective.

Chemical: Easily identifiable green rosettes can be treated in late spring or early fall when temperatures are above 50 degrees. Herbicide applications of clopyralid, glyphosate or triclopyr have been effective.

Common teasel
(flower head, left; pink areas on maps)

Cut-leaved teasel
(flower stalk and rosette, above; blue areas on maps)

Giant Hogweed
Heracleum mantegazzianum

Description
Giant hogweed is striking due to its huge size, though plants take 3–4 years to flower. First-year seedlings have a single small leaf. As they mature, plants develop stout taproots and rosettes of large compound leaves (1–4 feet wide) that are deeply incised and pointed. Flowering plants are 7–15 feet tall, topped with a group of broad, flat-topped umbels of white flowers. Flower stalks can be 2–4 inches in diameter, with coarse white hairs and reddish-purple mottling. The bottoms of leaves also have coarse, dense hairs. The plant produces thousands of seeds, then dies after flowering.

Look-alikes
American cow parsnip *(Heracleum lanatum)* is smaller (3–7 feet) with a less lobed leaf structure and non-mottled flower stems. Great angelica *(Angelica atropurpurea)* also is much smaller, with solid purple stems and a spherical flowering umbel.

Habits & habitats
Giant hogweed, a native of Asia, currently is regulated by the USDA as a federal noxious weed. The species disperses by seed and naturalizes easily. It is found in a variety of disturbed areas such as roadsides, empty lots and woodland edges, but prefers areas with moist soils and some shade. It can be especially troublesome along riverbanks where it crowds out native vegetation, leads to soil erosion and readily disperses downstream by seed.

Caution! If sap from hogweed's leaves and stems gets on skin in the presence of sunlight, it can cause a severe, blistering "sunburn" that appears a day or two after exposure. Wild parsnip, cow parsnip and great angelica all can cause a similar phytophotodermatitis reaction.

Control
Because of the danger from its sap, cover all skin and protect eyes when working with this plant. Small populations can be hand-dug. Repeated mowing or cutting weakens the plants, but the large root can remain alive for many years. Treating foliage with glyphosate or triclopyr is effective if done early in spring or on resprouts after cutting. Do not allow hogweed to go to seed.

Japanese Hops
Humulus japonicus

Description
Japanese hops is a climbing, annual vine that grows rapidly, up to 8 feet long. Leaves are opposite, 2–5 inches long, serrated on the edges and palmately divided, usually into 5 lobes. Petioles (leaf stems) tend to be as long or longer than the length of leaves. Stems and leaves have stiff, hooked climbing hairs to grasp and twine clockwise up nearby vegetation. Male and female flowers are on separate plants and bloom from mid to late summer.

Look-alikes
Native hops *(Humulus lupulus)* is found throughout the state. A non-native variety grown for beer-making (*Humulus lupulus* var. *lupulus*) has been reported growing wild in three counties. Varieties of *H. lupulus* typically have 3-lobed leaves (though leaves sometimes lack lobes or have 5 lobes), with petioles shorter than leaf-length and less bristly leaves and stems.

Habits & habitats
In Wisconsin, Japanese hops has been found in southern and western counties. It reproduces by seeds carried by animals and water. Preferring moist soils, it can form dense stands in floodplains and along streambanks and lakeshores, but can thrive in disturbed areas such as roadsides and urban lots. It can be found in full sun or shade.

Control
Plants can be hand pulled and removed from the area before seeds ripen. The herbicide glyphosate can be used on foliage before plants flower.

seed, leaf, flowers

Japanese Stilt Grass
Microstegium vimineum

Description
Japanese stilt grass is an annual grass that can reach 5 feet in height, but tends to grow 1–3 feet in a branching, sprawling, mat-like manner. Its pale green leaves alternate along a branched stalk, resembling a small, delicate bamboo. Leaves are lance-shaped, wide, 3 inches long and lightly hairy. A distinguishing feature is a pale, silvery stripe of reflective hairs along the midrib of the upper leaf surface. Flower spikes 1–3 inches long appear in September and produce seed by early October.

Look-alikes
The native perennial whitegrass or Virginia cutgrass *(Leersia virginica)* is similar, but it lacks the silver stripe along the midrib and blooms earlier (August). Nodes (where leaves emerge) are smooth in stilt grass, hairy in *Leersia*. In fall, stilt grass turns yellow to pale purple, while whitegrass stays green. A non-grass look-alike is smartweed or lady's thumb *(Polygonum persicaria)*. It can form masses of grass-like plants, but its leaves have a dark blotch, and flowers are pink and bead-like.

Habits & habitats
Stilt grass has become a significant problem in many eastern and Midwestern states. Although not yet known in Wisconsin, it is one of the most potentially troublesome future invasives. Stilt grass spreads rapidly due to high seed production and rooting at nodes along the stem. Often it takes hold in locations where moist soils are scoured, such as along streambanks, floodplains, ditches and trails, forming a large seedbank and spreading during floods. It often outcompetes native vegetation in areas where light levels are low. Typical habitats include river corridors, forested wetlands, moist woodlands, old fields and thickets, utility rights-of-way, roadsides and lawns.

Control
Because it is shallow-rooted, stilt grass can be pulled up at any time. Hand-pulling small infestations or mowing at peak bloom in September before seeds set will help control this species. The herbicide glyphosate has been shown to be effective in a 2% solution sprayed slowly and thoroughly over patches. Herbicidal soaps such as pelargonic acid or grass-specific herbicides such as sethoxydim are also effective. In dry areas, imazapic plus methylated seed oil can be applied pre- or post-emergence. Due to many seeds left in the soil, follow-up monitoring and treatment will be needed for years.

Wineberry or Wine Raspberry

Rubus phoenicolasius

Woolly undersides of leaves appear white

Description

Wineberry is a perennial shrub with long, arching canes (stems) up to 9 feet long. Leaves are alternate and each has three serrated leaflets. Ripe berries are bright red and delicious. Canes, leaf stems, and flowering structures are densely covered with both purplish-red hairs and small thorns, especially in newer growth. The hairs can give the canes a furry, reddish appearance when seen from a distance. The undersides of leaves appear white, due to a layer of woolly white hairs.

Look-alikes

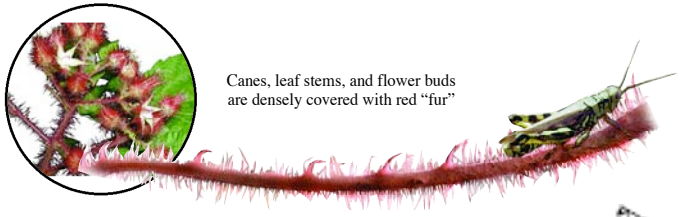
The native red raspberry *(Rubus idaeus)* is quite similar, but its leaflets tend to be narrower and more pointed and its prickly hairs usually less numerous and not red in color. The native blackcap raspberry *(Rubus occidentalis)* has scattered rose-like thorns on stems and flower structures. In both, leaves typically are only pale whitish on the underside.

Habits & habitats

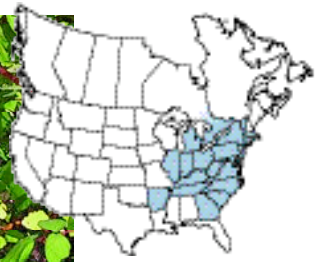
This Asian immigrant has become a serious pest in eastern and Midwestern states. It produces a large number of fruits that are readily eaten and dispersed by birds. Seeds passed by birds sprout and form dense, impenetrable thickets, crowding out native vegetation. It also spreads when tips of the canes touch the soil, take root and produce new plants. Wineberry prefers moist soils and plenty of sunlight, but can thrive in disturbed areas, wetlands, forest edges, floodplains, open-canopy woodlands and roadsides.

Control

In small areas, the site can be mowed or stems cut, followed by an herbicide treatment of foliage resprouts using triclopyr, metsulfuron-methyl (both are broadleaf specific), or non-selective glyphosate. A cut-stump application of glyphosate or triclopyr in the fall can be effective. Plants can be hand pulled or the roots dug out. Monitor the site to treat resprouts and seedlings.



Canes, leaf stems, and flower buds are densely covered with red "fur"



Japanese Hedge-parsley

Torilis japonica

Spreading Hedge-parsley

Torilis arvensis

Description

Hedge-parsleys are biennials with taproots and slender ridged stems. First-year plants are low, parsley-like rosettes that stay green until late fall. Flowering plants are branched, grow 2–6 feet tall, and bloom in midsummer. Leaves are alternate, fern-like, 2–5 inches long and slightly hairy. Tiny white flowers are clustered in small, open, flat-topped umbels. Japanese hedge-parsley has 2 or more pointed bracts at the base of each umbel, whereas spreading hedge-parsley lacks such bracts. The small fruit, which ripens quickly, is covered in hooked hairs that attach to clothing and fur, readily dispersing the seed.

Look-alikes

Queen Anne's lace *(Daucus carota,* left in photo, compared with hedge-parsley on right), a widespread weed in Wisconsin, has similar finely-divided leaves, but leaves and stems are quite hairy. It also has larger, flat-topped flower umbels, with densely packed white flowers. When crushed, Queen Anne's lace smells like carrots. There are several other white-flowered look-alikes in the parsley family.

Habits & habitats

In Wisconsin, Japanese hedge-parsley has been found in southern counties. Spreading hedge-parsley is not currently known in Wisconsin. Habitat includes disturbed upland sites such as roadsides, urban areas, woodlands and railroad rights-of-way.

Control

Pull or mow prior to flowering. Treating foliage with glyphosate or triclopyr is effective if done early in the spring or on resprouts after cutting. Monitor the site for additional seedlings.

Above, Japanese hedge-parsley against canvas. See also page 2 for seeds, flowers and habitat of this species.

Japanese hedge-parsley's umbel of tiny flowers, above, and finely-divided leaves,

Spreading hedge-parsley

Japanese hedge-parsley

Black Swallow-wort

Dog-strangling Vine, Climbing Milkweed

Vincetoxicum nigrum

syn. *Cynanchum louiseae*

Pale Swallow-wort

European Swallow-wort

Vincetoxicum rossicum syn. *Cynanchum rossicum*

Description

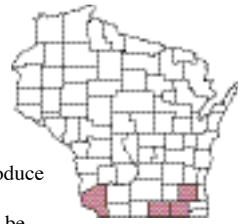
Both swallow-worts look similar, but differ in flower color and shape. Swallow-wort vines twine 3–10 feet high, often smothering nearby vegetation. Leaves are opposite, 2–5 inches long, toothless, narrowly to broadly oval with pointed tips, and dark green with smooth, shiny surfaces. Flowers of black swallow-wort are dark purple, and each of the five pointed petals is triangular—about as long as wide—and finely pubescent with tiny white hairs. Pale swallow-wort flowers are maroon to pink, and each petal is at least twice as long as wide and lacks hairs. Slender, tapering seed pods, 1.5–3 inches long, resemble those of other milkweeds. Ripe seeds are wind dispersed on silky filaments.

Habits & habitats

Black swallow-wort occurs in a few large infestations in southern Wisconsin. Pale swallow-wort, while not yet documented in the state, is reputed to be a more aggressive invader, forming impenetrable, tangled thickets. Both of these European invaders prefer sunny, upland habitats such as woodland edges, old fields, fencerows, roadsides, vacant lots and pastures, but they also grow well in forests.

Control

Eradication is difficult once a colony is established because plants form a dense, knobby mass of underground roots. Initial control efforts should concentrate on plants in sunny areas since they produce the most seeds. All pods should be removed before they open, then burned or landfilled to prevent seed release. Triclopyr or glyphosate with a surfactant can be applied to foliage during the growing season. Cut-stem treatment with glyphosate is also effective, but labor intensive. If plants are hand-dug, all roots must be removed. Monitor for populations in late summer when plants turn yellow and pods become prominent.



Black swallow-wort

Pale swallow-wort

Flowering Rush

Butomus umbellatus

Description

Flowering rush is a perennial aquatic herb that emerges each spring from winter-hardy rhizomes. Emergent leaves are stiff, narrow, sedge-like (3-edged or triangular in cross-section at the base) and about 3 feet tall. In deep water, the plant can be entirely submerged. Often unnoticed among other wetland plants until it blossoms, flowering rush has a distinctive spray of attractive white, pink, or purple flowers on a tall stalk. Blooming in late summer to early fall, flowers have 3 petals, 3 sepals, and red anthers.

Look-a likes

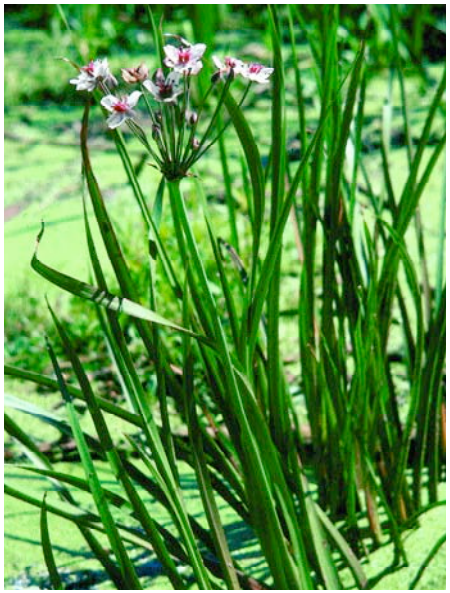
Flowering rush leaves resemble those of bur-reeds (*Sparganium* spp.), floating or emergent shallow-water perennials that are 1–4 feet tall. The several species of bur-reed in Wisconsin all have keeled (V-shaped) leaves, and female flowers in dense heads that resemble small, spiked balls.

Habits & habitats

Brought from Asia as an ornamental, flowering rush has escaped from water gardens and now is found in several northern states including Wisconsin. It prefers shallow or slow moving water where it grows as an emergent plant in marshes, backwaters and along shorelines. Submerged plants have limp leaves and do not flower. Plants spread by underground rhizomes, forming dense stands and crowding out native species. Reproduction from seed is uncommon.

Control

Due to its resemblance to several native shoreline plants when not in flower, accurate identification of flowering rush is essential. Plants can be cut below the water surface several times during the summer. They will re-sprout, but eventually will decrease in abundance. Small populations can be hand-dug or pulled—but extreme care must be taken to remove all root fragments. When the root system is disturbed, small reproductive structures can break off and spread to other areas. All plant parts should be composted away from aquatic environments. Use of chemical herbicides in all Wisconsin aquatic environments (streams, lakes and wetlands) requires a permit from the DNR. Mechanical harvesting may require a permit.



European Marsh Thistle

Cirsium palustre

Description

This herbaceous biennial grows 4–5 feet tall, primarily in moist areas. Leaves in first-year rosettes are spiny, long, deeply lobed and hairy on the underside. On flowering plants, leaves are 6–8 inches long near the plant base and shorter toward the top. Flowering stems are erect, thick, sometimes reddish in color, branched at the top and bristling with spiny "wings" aligned with the stem. Clusters of spiny purple flower heads bloom in June and July and by late summer produce tiny seeds attached to feathery "thistle-down."

Look-alikes

The native marsh thistle *(Cirsium muticum)* has non-spiny stems and flower heads. Other common invasive thistles include Canada thistle *(Cirsium arvense),* which has spiny leaves but non-spiny stems and flower heads; and bull thistle *(Cirsium vulgare)* and plumeless thistle *(Carduus acanthoides),* which have sharply spined leaves, stems and flower heads.

Habits & habitats

In Wisconsin, European marsh thistle occurs in localized populations, primarily in northern counties. It prefers moist, acidic soils and is found along roadsides and in wetlands, forest edges and fields. Like other thistles, its seeds readily disperse in the wind.

Control

Repeated mowing or selective cutting close to the ground can reduce an infestation within three or four years. The rosettes can be hand pulled or dug. Flowering heads can be cut off while in the unopened bud stage. Clopyralid or metsulfuron-methyl may be used as foliage sprays. A 1–2% active-ingredient solution of glyphosate can also be used when plants are 6–10 inches tall, during the bud to flowering stage, or applied to rosettes in the fall.

European Frog-Bit

Hydrocharis morsus-ranae

Description

European frog-bit is a free-floating aquatic plant resembling a miniature water lily. Leaves are thick, heart-shaped, 1–2 inches wide and smooth edged, with spongy, purplish-red undersides. Small, showy flowers, about an inch across, appear singly and have 3 white petals and yellow centers. Roots are 3–8 inches long and unbranched, dangling from the underside of each rosette of leaves. Plants form a thick mat with tangled roots and runners.

Look-alikes

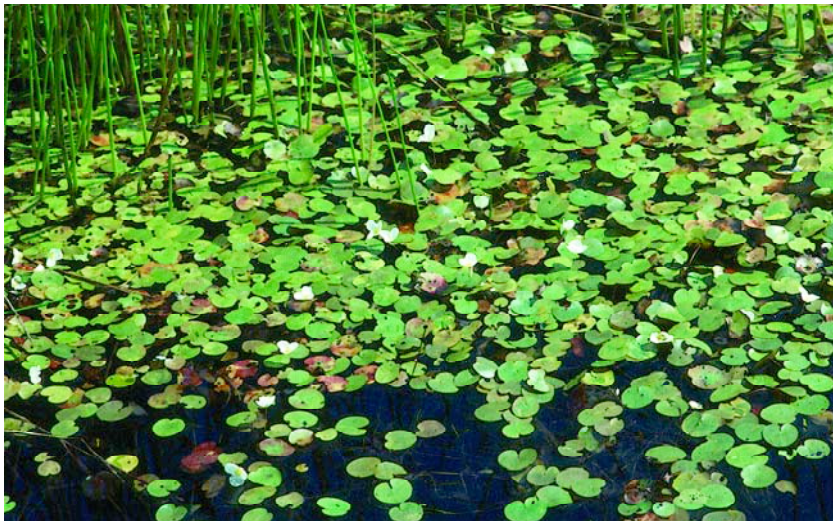
European frog-bit can be mistaken for water lily, but its leaves are distinctly heart-shaped, leathery and much smaller than any of Wisconsin's water lilies. Water-lily flowers are much larger, with more than 3 petals.

Habits & habitats

European frog-bit is present in New York, Vermont, Michigan and Ontario but is not yet known in Wisconsin. There are two primary methods of reproduction. Plants send out horizontal stems (stolons), which produce daughter plants that can break free and float to new locations. It also produces turions—compact buds that sink to the bottom in autumn and float back up in spring to grow into new plants. It prefers quiet waters and can blanket shallow ponds, marshes and edges of lakes, inhibiting light penetration and hindering the movement of fish, waterfowl and boats. Like other aquatics, it can spread to new locations from plant fragments attached to boats and trailers.

Control

Plants can be collected by hand or mechanical harvesters and composted away from aquatic environments. Care must be taken to prevent plant fragments from escaping the infested site. Use of chemical herbicides in all Wisconsin aquatic environments (streams, lakes and wetlands) requires a permit from the DNR. Mechanical harvesting may require a permit.

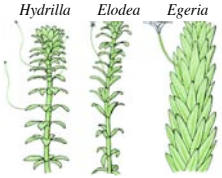


Hydrilla

Hydrilla verticillata

Description

Hydrilla is a prolific, rapidly growing, submerged aquatic plant that can thrive in water from a few inches to 20 feet deep. Leaves are small (< .75 inch), triangular-pointed and occur in whorls of 4–8 along the stem. Unlike many native water plants, hydrilla leaves have serrated edges and one or more protruding barbs or bumps along the midrib on the underside. Stems are heavily branched near the surface and grow horizontally, forming dense mats. Small tubers are present at the rooted base of the plant.



Look-alikes

Hydrilla is often confused with the native waterweeds (*Elodea canadensis* and *Elodea nuttallii*), whose leaves, typically in whorls of 3, appear smooth-edged and lack spines on the midrib. Hydrilla also resembles the invasive Brazilian waterweed *Egeria densa,* which is not yet in Wisconsin and has finely serrated leaves (.75–1.5 inches) in whorls of 3–6.

Habits & habitats

A native of Africa, hydrilla was brought to the U.S. as an aquarium plant. It is now widespread in southern states and has been reported as far north as Oregon and Maine, though is not known to occur in Wisconsin. Hydrilla has several methods of reproduction. Branch or root fragments from broken plants can drift to new areas, or spread to other lakes and rivers if attached to boats and trailers. Turions (tiny, compact buds that form in autumn in leaf axils along the stem) break free and drift to new areas. Tubers, which form on the roots and can lie dormant for several years, can propagate new plants. Hydrilla is a serious threat to aquatic habitats everywhere because of its adaptability, growing in flowing or still waters, and in shallow, deep, and low-light conditions.

Control

Because hydrilla is similar to native waterweeds, be sure of proper identification before beginning control measures. Plants can be collected by hand or mechanical harvesters. Compost all parts away from aquatic areas. Use of chemical herbicides in all Wisconsin aquatic environments (streams, lakes and wetlands) requires a permit from the DNR. Mechanical harvesting may require a permit.

Water Chestnut

Trapa natans

Description

Water chestnut is an annual, rooted aquatic plant with a leafy rosette that floats on the surface. Stems can extend up to 16 feet, supporting two types of leaves. Submersed leaves are feathery, whorled along the stem and up to 6 inches long. Surface leaves are triangular, 1–2 inches long, waxy and have toothed edges; their stalks have a bladder-like swelling that provides buoyancy. Flowers are small, white, have 4 petals and bloom from mid July to fall frost. The fruit is an inch-wide woody nut armed with 4 stout barbs. The sharp barbs are a painful hazard to swimmers and bare feet.

Habits & habitats

Water chestnut, originally from Eurasia, is present in northeastern states but not yet known in Wisconsin. Each rosette can produce 15 nuts per season that sink to the bottom and remain viable for up to 12 years. The seeds germinate in spring, and each new plant can divide into 10–15 rosettes over the summer. One acre of water chestnut can produce enough seeds to cover 100 acres the following year. Dense mats of stems and floating rosettes can deplete oxygen levels, choke out native species and hinder navigation. Water chestnut spreads by seed, by rosettes that break apart and float to new locations, and by fragments that attach to boats and trailers. It prefers calm, nutrient-rich lakes or streams with slightly alkaline waters.

Control

Infestations can be eradicated by hand-pulling or through mechanical harvest, but sites must be monitored for many years to spot plants germinating from dormant seeds. Use of chemical herbicides in all Wisconsin aquatic environments (streams, lakes and wetlands) requires a permit from the DNR. Mechanical harvesting may require a permit.

Here's What To Do…

Check our website for more photos and instructions.

http://dnr.wi.gov/invasives/futureplants

When you find a Target Plant… or if you think you've found one but need an expert to confirm identity:

- Collect a good specimen (fresh or pressed) and/or take photos. For plant experts, it may be enough to simply report the plant and its location.
- Fill out an Invasive Plant Report Form, available from our website or by calling 608-267-7612. Send report and specimen to the Herbarium at the address below.
- Contact the Project Coordinator at the address below.

For small populations—*and only if you are certain of identification*—eliminate all plants. At a minimum, prevent plants from producing fruits or seeds. If you need assistance to control the population, contact a local land manager or the project coordinator. And ALWAYS report your findings and actions so we can keep track of all target invasives.

Extra Credit: can you identify the invasive species on this brochure's cover?

You Are Invited…

…to become a Wisconsin Weed Watcher. Join Wisconsin landowners, sport and recreation enthusiasts, naturalists, park employees, educators, gardeners, resource professionals, and other citizens as they help nip new plant invasions in the bud. **Register soon!**

For Information Contact:

Project Coordinator
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430 Lincoln Drive
Madison WI 53706

608-267-7612 • InvasivePlants@mailplus.wisc.edu
http://dnr.wi.gov/invasives/futureplants

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