



Eurasian Watermilfoil

Myriophyllum spicatum



Photo: Carol Kaliff



Photo: John Halpop



Photo: Meghann Bruce

What's the problem

Eurasian watermilfoil (EWM) rapidly establishes in aquatic ecosystems: clogging waterways, altering water flow, and forming dense floating mats that shade out underlying native plants. It can spread easily into other waterbodies through fragments created by human disturbance (boats) or self-fragmentation.

CHARACTERISTICS

Life cycle	Establishes early in the growing season and persists throughout summer and into late fall.
Size/ Structure	Stems grow up in vertical columns from the bottom. Multiple stems entangle to form dense patches and floating mats on the surface.
Leaves	Leaves are whorled, with 4-5 leaves arranged around stem like a windmill. Each leaf is made up of 12+ pairs of thread-like leaflets.
Stem	Red to light yellow in colour, with leaves spaced out along the stems more than 1cm apart. Can have long sections of stem without any leaves as they can auto-fragment.
Flowers	Small flowers are produced in late July into early August at the (end of the plant, made up of small orange/red flowers (4-6mm).
Habitat	Freshwater lakes, rivers, and ponds. Prefers to root in shallow water (1-3 m) but can root in deeper slow-moving water (>10 m).

Key ID Features

- Submerged vegetation forming dense floating mats, with long trailing stems and feather-like leaves (12+ segments)
- “Bottle-brush” appearance, leaves grow close together along entirety of stem



Common Look-a-Likes

Northern Watermilfoil (native)

Native species that does not colonize areas like EWM; can hybridize with EWM making ID difficult.



Native Northern Milfoil

Invasive Milfoil

Native Northern Milfoil

More sparse, usually <10 pairs of leaflets

Invasive Milfoil

11-21 pairs of leaflets, in NB typically 12+ pairs of leaflets



12+ pairs