



Eurasian Water Milfoil

(*Myriophyllum spicatum*)

Provincial Designation: Restricted

Overview:

Eurasian water milfoil is a perennial, aquatic, submersed herb introduced from Eurasia. It forms large, floating mats that prevent light penetration into water bodies, thus out-shading native plants. In lakes or other aquatic areas where native aquatic plants are not well established, the Eurasian plant can quickly spread.

It does produce seed, however germination rates are poor. It reproduces rapidly through stem fragmentation and underground runners. Plant fragments can attach to boats, trailers, or animals and be moved from one body of water to another. A single segment of stem and leaves can form a new colony.

There are native water milfoils, and just like the Eurasian plant, all have submersed stems, feathery leaves, and tiny flowers produced above the water surface.

Habitat:

Native to Eurasia and Africa, it grows best in fertile, fine-textured, inorganic sediments. It prefers highly disturbed lake beds, or lakes receiving nitrogen and phosphorous-laden runoff. It is tolerant of many water pollutants.



Identification:

Stems: Stems are long, slender, branching, hairless, and become leafless towards the base. The plant usually grows between 1-4 m but can extend up to 10 m. Each floating node can take root if it comes into contact with mud. Stems are usually pale pink to reddish brown.

Leaves: Leaves are grayish-green and occur in whorls of 3 or 4 with 12-16 pairs of fine, thin leaflets up to 35 mm long. Eurasian water milfoil has 12- 21 pairs of leaflets while North American water milfoil only has 5-9 pairs. When the leaves are taken out of the water they lose their stability and collapse around the stem.

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Flowers: Small, yellow, 4 petals and 4 sepals produced on a spike 5-10 cm above the water surface. Flowers are alternate and attached directly to the stem.

Seed: The fruit is a hard, segmented capsule containing 4 seeds.

Prevention:

Eurasian water milfoil is spread by primarily by boats and to a lesser extent, water birds. When leaving any water source, thoroughly inspect and remove all vegetative debris from boats and trailers.

Control:

Cultivation: The British Columbia Ministry of Environment developed a barge mounted rototilling machine called a rotovator to remove Eurasian water milfoil roots. Underwater tiller blades churn up to 8 inches into the sediment and dislodge buoyant Eurasian water milfoil roots. Floating roots may then be collected from



the water. Control with rotovation, generally extends 2 or more growing seasons.

Mechanical: A hand rake can be used for smaller areas, such as around docks and swimming areas. One raking per season should be done at the peak of growing. Otherwise multiple rakings are most effective. Be sure to remove all fragments.

Where manipulation of water levels is possible, milfoil can be 'drowned' or dehydrated, and at the right time of year frozen to death, by raising or lowering the water level.

Chemical:¹ There are selective herbicides for Eurasian water milfoil. Consult your local Agricultural Fieldman, Certified Pesticide Dispenser, or Alberta Environment for more information.

Biological: Although triploid grass carp will eat Eurasian water milfoil, it is not a highly palatable or preferred species. To achieve control of Eurasian water milfoil generally means the total removal of more palatable native aquatic species before the grass carp will consume Eurasian water milfoil. In situations where Eurasian water milfoil is the only aquatic plant species in the lake, this may be acceptable. However, generally grass carp are not recommended for Eurasian water milfoil control. For more information: [http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$Department/deptdocs.nsf/all/agdex3446](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$Department/deptdocs.nsf/all/agdex3446)

¹ Always follow the product labels. The use of pesticides in any manner not published on the label or registered under the *Minor Use of Pesticides* regulation constitutes an offence under both the *Federal Pest Control Products Act* and *Alberta's Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act*.