

Invasive Plants in Pennsylvania

Parrot's-feather watermilfoil

Myriophyllum aquaticum



John M. Randall, TNC

Background:

This species was introduced to the U.S. first in the Washington, D.C. area in the 1890s as an aquarium and aquatic landscaping plant, and has since spread to much of the U.S.

Range:

Originally native to South America, this species can now be found along both the Atlantic and Pacific coasts as well as across the southwest and southeast U.S. (*see map on right*). In Pennsylvania, it is known to exist in southeast counties as well as Lackawanna, Bedford and Adams counties.

Description:

This species can be found floating on the surface or submerged. Both submersed and emergent leaves are whorled and finely pinnate with 10 to 18 segments on either side.

Habitat:

This species prefers slow-moving, freshwater habitats including ponds, lakes and canals. It prefers open, high-nutrient aquatic systems.

Biology and Spread:

This species spreads vegetatively either from whole plants or portions of plants. These fragments can be dispersed by people or often by animals.



Graves Lovell, AL DCNR

How to Control this Species:

Manual or mechanical control is not recommended for this species due to its ability to spread vegetatively. Any cutting or mowing can result in the spread of fragments that can establish new populations.

Similarly, herbicides have limited effectiveness due to a waxy cuticle that protects this species against most chemicals. Extreme care must be taken in applying herbicides to aquatic habitats. Be sure to use herbicides that readily break down in water and are not harmful to other aquatic plants or animals.

Some research suggests draining ponds or small water bodies can provide some control.

Currently, biological control agents for *M. aquaticum* are still being researched, including flea beetles, weevils and fungal control options.

Ecological Threat:

As with many aquatic invasives, *M. aquaticum* can form dense mats which makes recreational use difficult. In addition, these dense mats often out compete and limit native aquatic plant populations.



Richard Old

www.forestryimages.com

Look-A-Likes:

Another non-native, invasive plant looks very similar: *Myriophyllum spicatum* (Eurasian water-milfoil). This species does not have lobed leaves occurring below the flowers.



Alison Fox, Univ. of Florida