

Vermont Invasive Exotic Plant Fact Sheet

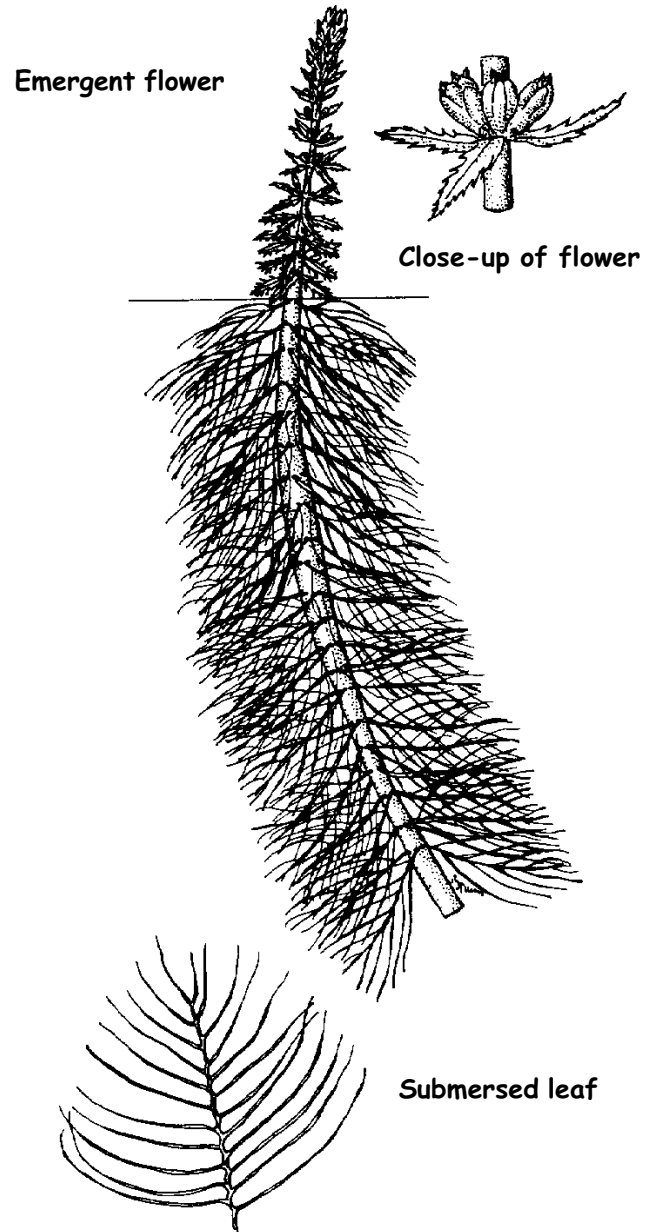
Variable-leaved Watermilfoil *Myriophyllum heterophyllum* Michx. Watermilfoil Family Vermont Class A Noxious Weed

Description: Variable-leaved watermilfoil is a rooted, submersed, perennial aquatic plant. Its name is derived from its 2 types of leaves. Under the water surface, its leaves are finely divided into segments giving them a feather-like appearance, a characteristic common to other members of the watermilfoil family. The underwater leaves are arranged in whorls of 4 to 6 around the stem. Each leaf has 7 to 11 pairs of segments. Above the water surface, the leaves are blade-like with serrated edges. Variable-leaved watermilfoil's flowers develop at the base of these above-water leaves, forming an erect, stiff spike. The flower spikes rise several inches above the water surface with male flowers arranged above female flowers on the spike. Flowers are small, inconspicuous, and are pollinated by wind. Spread of variable-leaved watermilfoil occurs via stem fragments, winter buds, roots, and to a lesser extent by seeds.

Habitat: Variable-leaved watermilfoil can be locally abundant and aggressive in ponds, lakes, streams, and springs. In New England, it has been restricted to waters of low alkalinity; west of New England it is typically found in alkaline waters.

Threats: In some waters, populations of variable-leaved watermilfoil are so dense that recreational activities such as swimming, boating, and fishing are severely limited. Thick stands of the plant can outcompete native aquatic vegetation, resulting in nearly monotypic growth with less habitat value.

Distribution: Native to some areas of eastern North America, variable-leaved watermilfoil populations have been documented in 34 states and two Canadian provinces. Its range in the United States extends from New England, where it dominates a number of lakes in southern Maine and New Hampshire, to South



(Crow and Hellquist 1982. *Aquatic Plants of New England Series: Myriophyllum heterophyllum*. Illustration by Pam Bruns)

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Variable-leaved Watermilfoil Watermilfoil Family (*Haloragaceae*)

Distribution continued: Dakota, Florida, Texas, Oklahoma, and New Mexico. It has not yet been found in Vermont.

Control: Variable-leaved watermilfoil is difficult to control once fully established. Mechanical removal, physical habitat manipulation methods, and herbicides have been employed with varying degrees of success.

* No person may use pesticides, biological controls, bottom barriers, structural controls or powered mechanical devices in waters of the state to control nuisance aquatic vegetation, insects or other aquatic life including lamprey unless that person has been issued a permit by the secretary of the Agency of Natural Resources.

References:

- Crow, G.E. and C.B. Hellquist. 1983. *Aquatic Vascular Plants of New England: Part 6. Trapaceae, Haloragaceae, Hippuridaceae*. New Hampshire Agricultural Experiment Station, University of New Hampshire, Durham, New Hampshire. Station Bulletin 524.
- Gleason, Henry A. and Arthur Cronquist. 1963. *Manual of Vascular Plants of Northeastern United States and Canada*. The New York Botanical Garden.
- Whitley, James R., Barbara Bassett, Joe G. Dillard, and Rebecca A. Haefner. 1990. *Water Plants for Missouri Ponds*. Missouri Department of Conservation.



For more information about Vermont's invasive exotic plant species or if you would like to know how you can help, please contact:

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