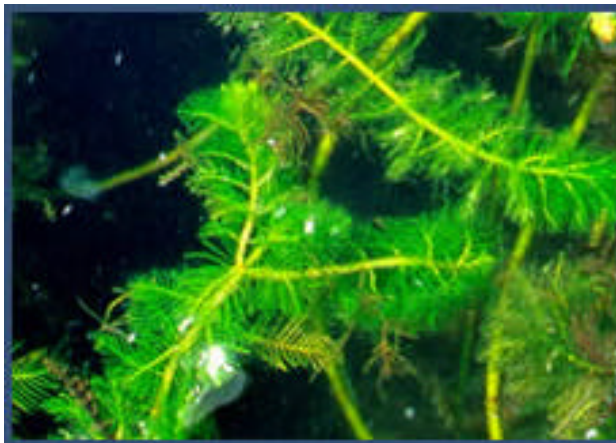


How to Identify Eurasian Watermilfoil

Eurasian Watermilfoil is identifiable by its whorls of four feather-like leaves arrayed around a central stalk. Each leaf is finely divided into paired leaflets, with 12 to 21 pairs per leaf.

The number of stalks per plant increases as the plant ages. Each individual stalk tends to branch several times as it nears the water surface, creating a dense floating mat over the surface of the lake. The tops of the milfoil plants, both stems and leaves, often turn red in color; this is especially true of the seed stalks that stick above the surface of the water.



Isolated plants usually do not exhibit the characteristics seen in older mature plants. These plants are usually single stalks between 1 and 5 feet in length, although they are occasionally bigger or smaller.



Photo Credit: A. Fox- Univ. of FL.

The smaller plants can be easily mistaken for Eurasian Watermilfoil's close cousin North American Milfoil. This plant, though similar in appearance to Eurasian Watermilfoil, has a darker green appearance, is bigger in diameter, is usually less than 1 foot in height and it has more than 4 whorls on its stem. This plant is native to North America and should be left in place.

The best method for removing isolated milfoil plants is to swim down the length of the plant collapsing the plant from the top down into the palm of the hand, before reaching into the bottom sediment and removing the roots. This not only makes the plant easier to stuff into a bag for removal (mesh laundry bags work well for light amounts of plant matter), but it also reduces the likelihood of fragmenting the plant during harvesting.

Another method used for larger stands is to skip collapsing the plant and simply grab around the root ball and remove the roots, stuffing the roots and stem of the plant into a bag. This is preferred for scuba divers as it allows the diver to avoid constantly changing depth with each new plant.

Plant disposal can be taken care of by laying it in the sun to dry, and then place in a trash receptacle. Milfoil can also be used as compost; do not use near the shoreline, as fragments (even sun dried) when returned to the water can continue to grow.

