

# Aquatic Invasive Species on the March

## The Dangers of Water Gardening

By Becca Klemme, Burnett County Land Services

In the past few years the DNR and others have been educating boaters and anglers about the dangers of spreading exotic species on their boat trailers and in their live wells. You may have seen billboards, heard public service announcements, or been visited at your favorite boat landing by a local volunteer or DNR Water Guard officer about “stopping the spread”. While the threat from aquatic hitchhikers should be taken very seriously, it is not the only pathway for exotic species to invade our waterways. Water gardening, an increasingly popular pastime, is a significant threat that often goes unnoticed.

From the plastic garden pool with a built-in waterfall to the ½ acre landscape pond, enthusiasts spend nearly \$1 billion per year building, stocking and growing their water gardens. To serve this demand, garden centers and on-line retailers now offer a huge array of aquatic and wetland plants in every form and color. While some of these plants are native, most are exotic species. An exotic species becomes “invasive” when it can tolerate a wide range of conditions, is easy to establish, grows aggressively, and spreads in multiple ways. Many of these factors are just what you look for in an easy-to-grow garden plant.

Indeed, a quick review of on-line retailers shows that many offer plants that are currently on the [Federal Noxious Weed List](#) or listed as a prohibited species by the Wisconsin DNR. These include such popular water garden plants as parrot feather, yellow floating heart, flowering rush, and water chestnut. These and other plants have already proven to be invasive in Wisconsin or other northern climates. And you cannot count on the retailer knowing what they can or cannot ship to each state. In fact, when researchers at the University of Minnesota placed 14 online orders for restricted plants all but one of them was filled!

Even when a water gardener does his homework and orders noninvasive plants, there is still a significant danger of receiving unwanted invasive species. Researchers in the same study ordered 681 plants from 40 different suppliers and found that 93% of the orders also contained plants, algae, fungi, insects, or other animals they did not order. What was alarming is that 10% of the orders contained aquatic invasive species such as hydrilla, giant salvinia, or purple loosestrife. These often occurred as plant fragments, seedlings, or seeds mixed in with the desired plant. With most invasive species a small plant fragment or a single seed is more than enough to start a new invasion! In fact, the hydrilla infestation in Marinette County likely came from plant fragments on nursery stock from an east coast mail-order water

### Wisconsin Invasive Species Control List (NR 40)

#### Prohibited Species

Fanwort	<i>Camboba Carolina</i>
Australian swamp crop/ New Zeland Pygmy weed	<i>Crassula helmsii</i>
Dydimo/ Rock snot	<i>Didymosphenia geminate</i>
Brazilian waterweed	<i>Egeria densa</i>
Hydrilla	<i>Hydrilla verticillata</i>
European frogbit	<i>Hydrocharis morsus-ranae</i>
Oxygen weed/ African waterweed	<i>Lagorosiphon major</i>
Parrot feather	<i>Myriophyllum aquaticum</i>
Spiny naiad	<i>Najas minor</i>
Yellow floating heart	<i>Nymphoides pelata</i>
Water Chestnut	<i>Trapa natans</i>
Water Hyacinth	<i>Eichhornia crassipes</i>
Water Lettuce	<i>Pistia stratiotes</i>

#### Restricted Species

Flowering rush	<i>Butomus umbellatus</i>
Eurasian water milfoil	<i>Myriophyllum spicatum</i>
Curly-leaf pondweed	<i>Potamogeton crispus</i>
Narrow-Leaf cattail	<i>Typha angustifolia</i>
Purple Loosestrife	<i>Lythrum salicaria</i>

#### Watch Species

Mosquito fern	<i>Azolla pinata</i>
Pond water starwort	<i>Callitriche stagnalis</i>
Water hyacinth	<i>Eichhornia crassipes</i>
Indian swampweed	<i>Hygrophila polysperma</i>
Water spinach/swamp Morning-glory	<i>Ipomoea aquatica</i>
Dotted Duckweed	<i>Landoltia punctata</i>
Asian marshweed	<i>Limnophila sessiliflora</i>
Watercress	<i>Naturnium aquaticum</i>
Ducklettuce	<i>Ottelia alismoides</i>
Water lettuce	<i>Pistia stratiotes</i>
Salvinia species	<i>Salvinia spp.</i>

For a complete list of all Wisconsin species under consideration for listing, and for definitions and additional information go to <http://dnr.wi.gov/invasives/classification/>

(Continued on page 6)



**Aquatic Invasive Species on the March - continued from page 4**

garden store.

So what is the aspiring water gardener to do? Consider using native species. There are many native aquatic and wetland plants that look good and can fill your needs. While it's good to use natives, it's best to avoid collecting plants from the wild. The disturbance you create, especially when digging in wetlands, opens an area for invasive species to come in. Shop around and find growers that carry native species.

If you must use exotic plants acquaint yourself with the DNR list of prohibited and restricted species (see list on page 4). These plants should never be used. When you receive plants, verify that your order is correct. To help remove aquatic hitchhikers, rinse the plants well in several changes of tap water until they are clean. Be on the lookout for snails, newly sprouted plants and plant fragments.

When disposing of water garden plants it's vital that you do it correctly. Never, never, never dispose of water garden plants or drain your water garden into a natural lake, pond, stream or wetland. Unwanted plants should be disposed of in the garbage. Composting is risky because many seeds and tubers are very hardy and resistant to drying, decay, and high temperatures. Even native water garden plants should not be released to nearby waters since they may not be native to that particular lake or stream and any new introductions, even native ones, can cause problems.

So help do your part to prevent aquatic invasive species. Keep checking your boats and trailers for aquatic hitchhikers, AND know what you are planting in your water garden! Of course, if you do find any invasive aquatic species in our lakes and streams, please report them to the DNR or Burnett County Land Services. For information on safe water gardening, visit <http://www.seagrant.umn.edu/ais/watergardening> or [http://www.oar.noaa.gov/spotlite/archive/spot\\_watergarden.html](http://www.oar.noaa.gov/spotlite/archive/spot_watergarden.html).

**How You Can Help**

- Build your aquascapes away from natural waterways and flood zones.
- Learn to recognize invasive species.
- Purchase and plant non-invasive and native plants.
- Check plant orders for unwanted invasive hitchhikers.
- Do not use invasive plants, fish, crayfish or snails in your garden.
- Do not release any plants, fish or invertebrates into natural waters.

**Water Gardeners Beware...**

Some aquatic invasive plants found in Wisconsin are pictured here. ①Hydrilla (*Hydrilla verticillata*), ②Anacharis (*Egeris densa*), ③yellow floating heart (*Nymphoikes peltata*), ④European frogbit (*Hydrocharis morsus-ranae*), ⑤parrot feather (*Myriophyllum aquaticum*).

