

Aquatic Weeds – Invasive and Native

Invasive aquatic weeds are becoming a big problem in many lakes in the Northeast. ALMA has its limnologist do a weed survey of Andover Lake once a year, partly as a precaution. Members can contribute to the monitoring by becoming aware of what some of the more common invasive weeds look like, and being observant while using the lake. The earlier we identify an outbreak, the less costly it will be to eradicate the weeds and the more likely its spread to the entire lake can be avoided. Below we list some of the more common invasive aquatic weeds. A more complete description and a more thorough listing can be found from a publication of the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station in New Haven, www.ct.gov/caes/lib/caes/aquatics_guide.pdf. Please note that many aquatic weeds can be difficult to identify because they are similar to others. For instance hydrilla, which is a dangerous invasive, looks similar to a native form of elodea found in Andover Lake. The above-mentioned publication gives information about how to differentiate between the two. Aquatic weeds are more easily identified in water. They shrivel up out of water. Should you suspect an invasive weed in Andover Lake, notify an ALMA member or notify ALMA via the ALMA link on this website. If you transport your boat from another body of water, be sure to wash it thoroughly before putting it in Andover Lake. Washing with bleach is recommended.

Weeds are a natural part of a lake's ecology, but even native weeds can become a nuisance. The best way to prevent excessive weed growth, as well as algae blooms, is to limit the flow of nutrients into the lake by good practices, such as maintaining septic systems, not using lawn fertilizer, and providing a buffer zone of native vegetation between the lake and your lawn.

Some invasive aquatic weeds:

Eurasian water milfoil (figure 1) – Most people are aware of this invasive aquatic weed. Found in many lakes and ponds including the Connecticut River, its stems can grow from a depth of 12 feet and form a dense mat of vegetation near the surface.

Variable-leaf water milfoil (figure 2) – Also found in many lakes and ponds, including Mono Pond in Columbia, its long stems also produces dense mats of vegetation near the surface.

Fanwort – Found in lakes such as Bantam Lake and River in western Connecticut, fanwort has fan-shaped leaves.

Water chestnut – An extremely aggressive weed, it can expand its mass by up to 27 times in one year. Found in the Hockanum River and the Connecticut River, the Connecticut DEEP has been trying to eradicate it.

Hydrilla (figure 3) – Described as the perfect weed because it has so many ways of spreading, it has ravaged lakes in the South. At one time thought not to be able to survive in the north, it has now been found in several lakes. Last fall, some was identified in Coventry Lake.

Curly-leaf pondweed – Found in lakes including Lake Waramaug in western Connecticut, it has distinctive leaves with wavy edges.



Figure 1. Eurasian milfoil (from dnr.wi.gov)



Figure 2. Variable leaf milfoil (from mainelakes.org)



Figure 3. Hydrilla (from archive.constantcontact.com)

Some native weeds found in Andover Lake:

Najas Flexilis or Common Pondweed (figure 4) – it is very prevalent in Andover Lake and has been dense in parts of the lake in past years.



Figure 4. Common pondweed (from thismia.com)

Tape grass or eelgrass – It has been the source of complaints in the past two years, but is native. It sends stalks to the surface with small flowers in late summer.

Pickerelweed (figure 5) – Commonly found in the cove with broad leaves and purple flowers above the water's surface. It is found in many ponds and lakes.



Figure 5 – pickerelweed (from furman.edu)

Elodea – Another native weed found in Andover Lake, similar to hydrilla.