COMMON SUBMERGED AQUATIC PLANTS FOUND IN CLFLWD LAKES

Aquatic plants play a critical role in the ecology of lakes providing benefits for fish, wildlife and people. In lakes, life depends—directly or indirectly—on water plants. They are primary producers in the aquatic food chain, converting the basic chemical nutrients in the water and soil into plant matter, which becomes food for all other life. This guide is intended to assist in identifying most of the common aquatic plants present in Comfort Lake – Forest Lake Watershed District lakes.

CURLYLEAF PONDWEED

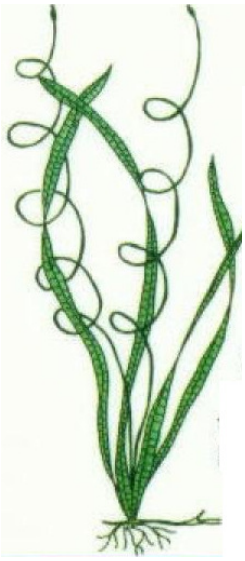
(*Potamogeton crispus*)

This aquatic invasive species (AIS) bears a waxy cuticle on its upper leaves making them stiff and somewhat brittle. The leaves have been described as resembling lasagna noodles but upon close inspection a row of "teeth" can bee seen to line the margins. Growing in dense mats near the water's surface, it out competes native plants for sun and space very early in the spring. By summer, massive natural die-offs can dramatically lower oxygen levels and re-release nutrients back into the water column triggering fish kills and algal blooms.

FLOATINGLEAF PONDWEED

(*Potamogeton natans*)

This pondweed can be distinguished from others by the shape of its to different types of leaves. The floating leaves are slightly heart-shaped while leaves below the water are very long and narrow, if present at all. This plant provides good cover for fish.



WILD CELERY

(*Vallisnaria americana*)

This submerged plant can form thick beds and dominate an area. The grass leaves have a distinctive vein pattern used to identify the plant. Flaccid when out of the water, the foliage occurs in tufts, much like turf grass. Soft muck bottoms are a preferred substrate, and its tubers are a favorite food for diving ducks.

CLASPINGLEAF PONDWEED

(*Potamogeton richardsonii*)

Appearing extremely leafy at the tip due to frequent branching, Claspinfleaf can be easily confused with Curlyleaf pondweed. Both bear wavy, submerged leaves, but Curlyleaf pondweed' sleaves are serrated along the edges. Claspingleaf has leaves with smooth edges and a wide base that nearly completely wraps around the stem.

LARGELEAF PONDWEED

(*Potamogeton amplifolius*)

This pondweed has thick, large stems and broad leaves. The submerged leaves appear wavy and taper toward the stem. Floating leaves are egg shaped and taper toward the stem.

EURASIAN WATERMILFOIL

(*Myriophyllum spicatum*)

This aggressive AIS, can grow 10-15 feet in length forming dense mats at the waters surface. Known to grow in muck, sand or rocky bottoms, it has become a nuisance plant in many lakes. Identifying features include a pattern of 4 leaves whorled around a hollow stem. Feathery in appearance, each leaf generally consists of 12-21 pairs of closely packed leaflets. Out of the water the leaves become limp, compressing against the stem.

MUSKGRASS

(*Chara*)

Chara, or Muskgrass as it is sometimes called, is typically found growing in clear, hardwater. Lacking true stems and leaves, Muskgrass is actually a form of algae. Its "stems" are hollow with leaf-like structures in a whorled pattern. It may be found growing with tiny, orange fruiting bodies on the branches. Thick masses of Chara can form in some areas. Often confused with Coontail of Milfoils, it can be identified by gritty texture and musky odor when crushed between the fingers.

COONTAIL

(*Ceratophyllum demersum*)

Getting its common name from its resemblance to a raccon's tail, Coon tail can be a desirable aquatic plant that supports waterfowl, fish and insects. However, thick growths around the shore can be problematic for recreational uses. Lacking true roots, it commonly floats near the surface later in summer. Stiff leaves are whorled around a hollow stem in groups of 5 to 12. Coontail can be differentiated from milfoils by bushy and forked leaves as opposed to feathery leaves

COMMON NAIAD

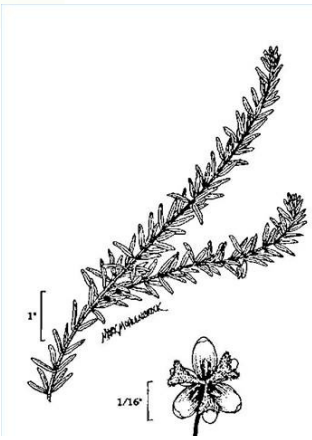
(*Najas flexilis*)

Leaves of the Common Naiad may occur in pseudo-whorls or oppositely positioned pairs. The ribbon-like leaves are submersed with variable spacing between the nodes. The lef tips taper to a fine point. Naiads are annual plants that grow from seed each year, and can form dense, bushy masses by mid-summer

NARROWLEAF PONDWEED (SAGO PONDWEED)

(*Potomogeton pectinatus*)

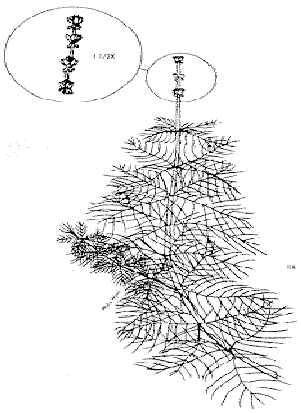
Sago Pondweed has very fine slender leaves. Multiple long thin leaves appear bushy beneath the water. When removed from the water the plant will relax with little or no rigidity. Sago pondweed provides cover for fish and food for waterfowl and similar to the Wild Celery, its tubers are a favorite food source for diving ducks such as canvasbacks.



CANADA WATERWEED (ELODEA)

(*Elodea canadensis*)

This submersed plant usually contains whorls of three broad oval leaves around the stem. Spacing of the whorls generally increases from the tip on down the plant. Whorls are compact near the growth tip with spacing between the whorls gradually increasing down the stem. This plant's leaves have smooth edges and lack the spine on the underside of the leaf.



NORTHERN WATERMILFOIL

(*Myriophyllum sibiricum*)

This native specie of milfoil has a hollow stem with whorled leaves at intervals along the entire length of the plant. Leaves are finely dissected to the mid-rib and feather-like appearance. This entire plant is submerged with the exception of a tiny stalk of flowers that may extend above the water surface. This plant can easily be confused with the invasive Eurasion watermilfoil. A few differences include tips and shoots that lack reddish brown color and leaves that tend to be more stiff and bristly than Eurasian watermilfoil and leaves that tend to be stiff when removed from water and generally have 5-10 leaflet pairs as compared to the 12-21 leaflet pairs found on Eurasian watermilfoil.