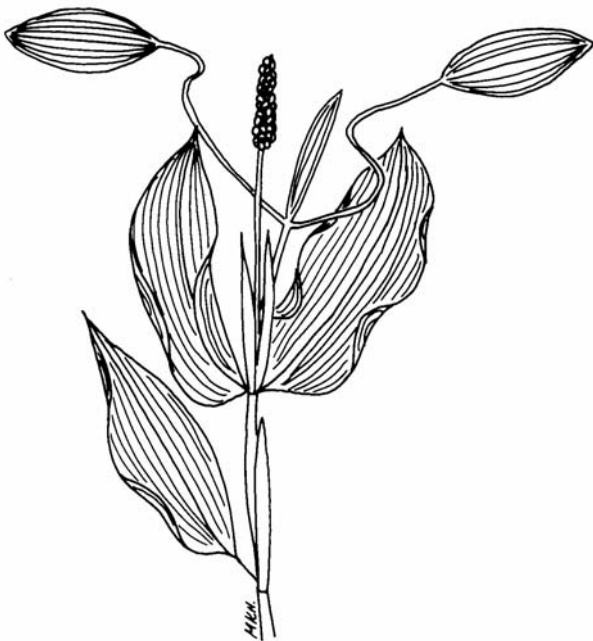


# ***COMMON AQUATIC PLANTS OF MICHIGAN***



*Prepared By  
State of Michigan  
Department of Environmental Quality  
Water Division*



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(Revised October 2002)

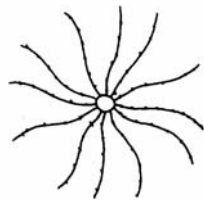
# COMMON AQUATIC PLANTS OF MICHIGAN

Following is a description of some of the most commonly occurring aquatic plants in Michigan. Some, such as contain, milfoil, and elodea, reproduce by fragmentation and can quickly reach nuisance density levels.

The pondweeds, genus *Potamogeton*, are highly viable in form and only a few representative types are described here.

If you have an aquatic plant not included here and have difficulty identifying it, refer to a professional consultant. You may also send a small sample in a plastic bag to:

Inland Lakes and Remedial Action Unit  
Water Division  
Michigan Department of Environmental Quality  
PO Box 30273  
Lansing, MI 48909-7773



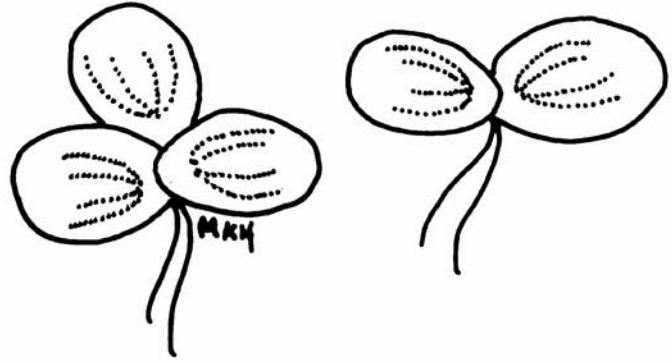
cross-section

## ***Chara spp.*; stonewort, muskgrass**

*Chara* is an advanced form of algae which resembles higher plants. It is easily identified by its musky odor and gritty texture due to mineral deposits on its surface. *Chara* rarely creates a nuisance as it usually grows in low, dense mats, or grows sparsely where nutrient levels are low. The water is clear where *chara* grows densely because, like other algae, it filters nutrients out of the water instead of the sediments. In this respect, *chara* is highly beneficial vegetation.

***Lemna minor*; duckweed**

Duckweed is a floating plant so small that a teaspoon could hold a dozen or more plants. At a distance, a congregation of duckweed plants may resemble algae on the water surface. This plant is common in ponds and quiet water of lakes and streams.



5x actual size

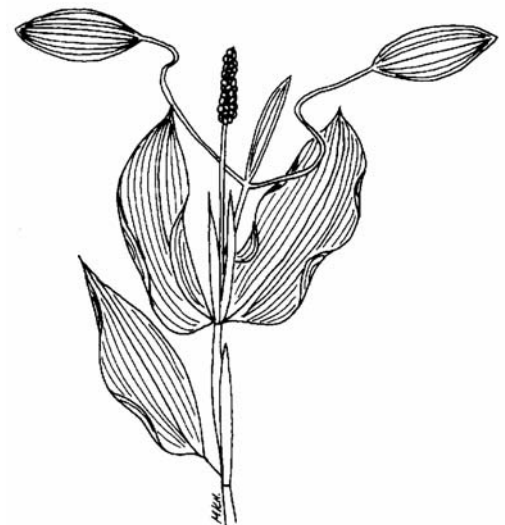


***Potamogeton natans*; floating-leaf pondweed**

Floating leaves are slightly heart-shaped. Submerged leaves long and narrow or absent. Flower stalks if present, protrude above water surface.

***Potamogeton amplifolius*; large-leaf pondweed**

Floating leaves oval in shape, submerged leaves large, wavy, recurved. Plants seldom branched.





***Potamogeton richardsonii*; clasp-leaf pondweed**

Leaves wide and wavy with broad base that clasps the stem. Plant often branches toward tip.

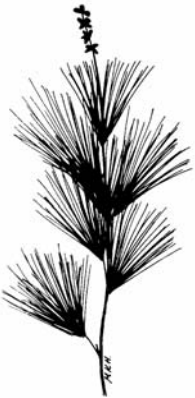
***Potamogeton crispus*; curly-leaf pondweed**

Leaves narrow and crinkled. Leaves arranged alternately around stem, becoming more dense toward end of branches. Flower stalks, if present, protrude above water surface.



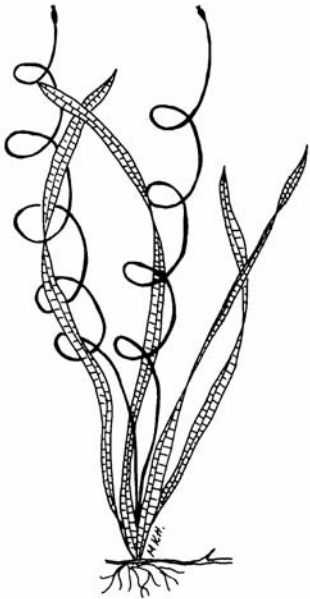
***Potamogeton pectinatus*; sago pondweed**

Leaves long and thread-like, arranged alternately on stem. Leaves form dense clumps on branches, providing a broom-like appearance. Flower stalks, if present, protrude above water surface.



***Naja flexilis*; common naiad**

Nodes (swelling) present at base of leaf whorls. Leaves tapered to fine point with minute spines on margin of leaves in some species. Spacing between whorls of leaves highly variable.

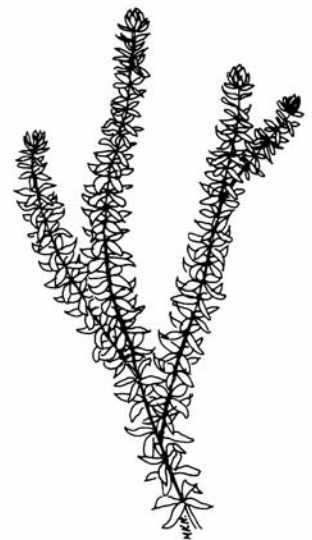


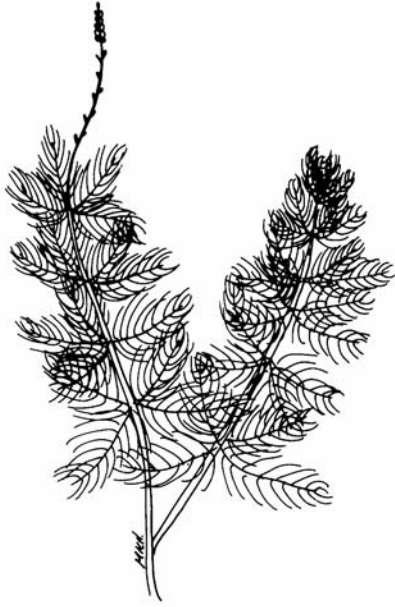
***Vallisneria americana*; wild celery**

Roots buried in bottom material. Leaves long and grass-like. Horizontal stem system connects tufts of leaves. Flower stalks, if present, spiral toward surface of water.

***Elodea canadensis*; american elodea**

Leaves oval shaped, arranged in whorls around stem. Whorls densely compacted at tips of branches. Commonly used as an aquarium plant.





***Myriophyllum spp.*; water milfoil**

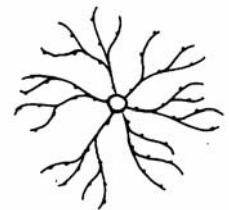
Milfoil is a submerged plant, however, the flower stalk, when present, protrudes above the water surface. Leaves are arranged in whorls around stem. Leaflets are unforked and arranged in a feather-like pattern (see cross-section illustration). Spacing between whorls varies so that plants may appear long and sparse or bushy. Milfoil can quickly become a nuisance by forming dense mats to the surface of the water.



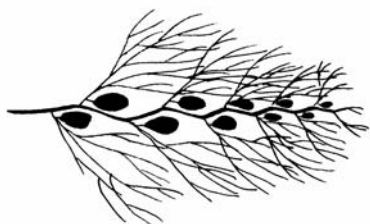
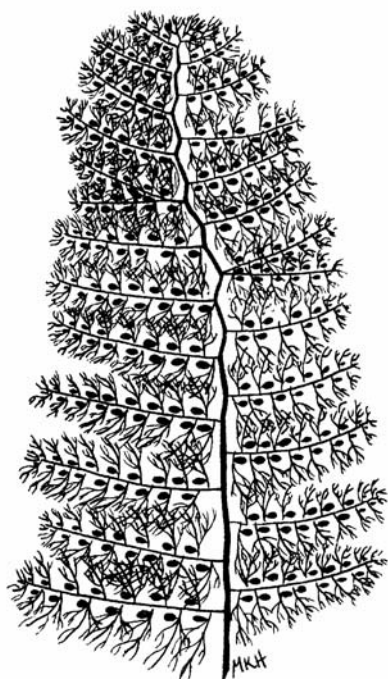
cross-section

***Certophyllum demersum*; coontail**

Coontail is a submerged plant without roots. The leaves are arranged in whorls around the stem. Leaflets are forked, not feather-like as in milfoil (see cross-section illustration). Plants may be long and sparse, but are often bushy, especially toward the tips of branches, resembling a raccoon's tail, hence the common name "coontail."



cross-section



detail of leaf

### ***Utricularia* spp.; bladderwort**

Although bladderwort is not as common as other aquatic plants presented in this article, it is sometimes confused with milfoil. A closer look reveals that the leaflets are branched, not feather-like as on milfoil (see detail illustration). The most distinguishing feature, however, is the presence of bladder-like structures which trap small aquatic invertebrates.

The "bladders" may be large and dark in color or small and inconspicuous.

### **Additional References**

*Introduction to Freshwater Vegetation* by Donald N. Riemer, Krieger Publishing Company, Melbourne, Florida, 1993 reprint (hardcover 218 pp.) 1-800-724-0025.

*A Manual of Aquatic Plants* by N.C. Fassett, revision appendix by E.C. Ogden. University of Wisconsin Press, Madison Wisconsin, 1969 (hardcover, 405 pp.)

Illustrations by Maureen K. Houghton, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, Environmental Science and Services Division.

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