

COMMON AQUATIC PLANTS OF THE COLUMBIA SLOUGH

Identification Guide

Aquatic plants (macrophytes) grow in or near water and are either **emergent** (growing above water), **submersed** (growing underwater) or **floating** (growing on water surface)

Most aquatic plants have inconspicuous flowers and seeds. They reproduce mainly by **fragmentation** (when a piece of a plant breaks off it will grow into new plant). Aquatic plants provide habitat and shelter for small fish and aquatic insects, help to clean water by trapping sediment, and slow fast-flowing water. Some aquatic plants in the Slough are so covered with sediment and algae that they are difficult to identify.

Some areas of the Columbia Slough experience excessive aquatic plant growth with large floating mats forming every year. These areas can be difficult to travel through in a canoe or kayak. The City of Portland and the Multnomah County Drainage District #1 are working on methods to reduce excessive macrophyte growth. Our goals are to improve passage, preserve habitat and water quality, and provide flood control.

NATIVE AQUATIC PLANTS and ALGAE



Pondweeds *Potamogeton spp*

- Genus of aquatic plants with varied appearances
- Can be grass-like with long skinny leaves
- Can have broad floating leaves
- Flower stalks emerge out of water above floating leaves



Coontail *Ceratophyllum demersum*

- Submersed perennial
- Grows freely floating or attached to mud
- Dark green bottle-brush leaves are sometimes brittle
- Can grow thickly and be a nuisance
- Not a known wildlife food source



Marsh Pennywort *Hydrocotyle ranunculoides*

- Floating, mat-rooted
- Deeply lobed round leaves that grow on stems above the water surface



Common Elodea *Elodea canadensis*

- Submersed perennial
- Green or brown leaves grow in whorls of 3 around the stem.
- Important food for wildlife, especially turtles.



Common Duckweed *Lemna minor*

- Floating
- Small (2-3mm) and bright green
- One short root hangs from each plant
- Important food for waterfowl and fish.



Algae

- 120+ types grow in the Slough.
- Some single-celled species float
- Some form stringy slimy colonies
- Often grow on top of floating mats of aquatic plants

NON-NATIVE AQUATIC PLANTS



Pond Water-Starwort *Callitriche stagnalis*

- Submersed annual
- Grows on top of other aquatic plants
- Round bright green leaves
- Leaf rosettes on water surface
- Beneficial non-native plant provides food for waterfowl



Curly Pondweed *Potamogeton crispus*

- Submersed and invasive
- Only non-native *Potamogeton* species in this region
- Distinctive slightly translucent wavy leaves.
- Displaces native aquatic plants
- Prolific in Whitaker ponds



Eurasian Watermilfoil *Myriophyllum spicatum*

- Submersed and aggressively invasive
- Displaces native aquatic plants
- Long underwater stem
- Feather-like leaves
- Flower stalks grow above the water in summer

INVASIVE PLANT ALERT: If you see the following invasive plants, contact the Oregon Invasive Species Council at 1-866-INVADER or <http://oregon.gov/OISC>



Parrotfeather *Myriophyllum aquaticum*

- Emergent and aggressively invasive
- Blocks water channels and displaces native plants
- Looks like small feathery tree above water surface
- Reproduces only by plant fragments
- Can survive summer droughts and cold freezes
- Present but rare in Columbia Slough



Hydrilla *Hydrilla verticillata*

- Submersed and aggressively invasive
- Dominates aquatic ecosystem when present
- Resembles Common Elodea
- Leaves are in whorls of 4-5, not 3
- Leaves are sharply toothed on close examination
- Hydrilla has not yet been found in Oregon



Water Primrose *Ludwigia spp*

- Emergent and aggressively invasive
- Blocks water channels and displaces native plants
- Roots in sediment and forms thick mats on water surface
- Leaves are oval and slightly shiny
- Flowers are bright yellow
- Has been found in Smith and Bybee wetlands.



ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES
CITY OF PORTLAND
1120 SW Fifth Avenue, Room 1000
Portland Oregon, 97204-1912