

Curlyleaf Pondweed - (*Potamogeton crispus*)



Curlyleaf pondweed is an Aquatic Invasive Plant heading towards southeastern Saskatchewan:

Some suggest that curlyleaf pondweed was the most severe invasive aquatic plant in the Midwest USA until Eurasian watermilfoil entered the region and became established. Curlyleaf pondweed is found in ponds, rivers, lakes, wetlands, streams and brackish waters.

Biology:

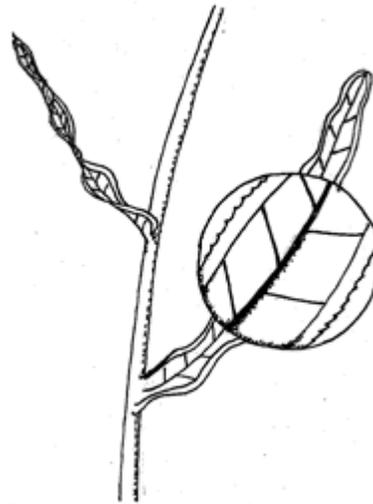
Curly leaf pondweed is a submersed perennial aquatic plant native to Eurasia, Africa, and Australia introduced into North America about the mid 1800s. It has naturalized throughout most of North America however has not yet been reported or confirmed in Manitoba. It is identified by its reddish green curly leaves with finely toothed margins that are curly. It may grow in depths of 5 meters in freshwater lakes, ponds and wetlands. Leaves are submersed and 12 cm wide and 575 cm long and attached directly to the stem. They are alternate, submersed and oblong, fine toothed with 3 main veins. The stems may be up to 1 meter long and are somewhat flattened.

Curlyleaf pondweed spreads primarily by winter buds called turions. Turions are hard, dark greenbrown, augershaped, about 2 cm long and 1 cm wide, produced at the tips of lateral branches. One plant may produce hundreds of turions that fall to the ground, over winter and germinate the next spring. Sprouting occurs in the fall in northern areas. Seeds play a small role in reproduction if any. Plants grow quickly in the spring and dieback midJuly. Curly leaf pondweed tolerates low light and temperatures and prefers nutrientrich habitats. It has an advantage over our native plants in that it begins growing earlier than most native aquatic plants winning valuable resources. Flowers are whitish, tiny, and have 4petal like lobes found on spikes raised above the water along the stalk. Roots are fibrous, white and unbranched.

General Characteristics:



Native Pondweeds have parallel veins and alternating leaves. Edges of leaves are smooth in native pondweeds.



Curlyleaf pondweed have a main midvein with secondary veins branching off from the midvein. Edges of leaves are also serrated.

- Like all pondweeds the leaves are alternating.
- Curlyleaf pondweed have serrated edges along the leaf edges, while native pondweeds have smooth edges.
- Where native pondweeds have parallel veins running the length of the leaf, curlyleaf pondweed have a midvein with secondary veins branching from the midvein.
- Curlyleaf pondweed produces overwintering buds called turions. They look like miniature floral arrangements and are hard and prickly.

Ecological damage:

Curlyleaf pondweed forms dense mats of vegetation displacing native plants and reducing overall biological diversity. Dense mats shade out native submerged species and impede recreational activities including boating and swimming. It forms dense mats impacting biological diversity and ecosystem functions. When curlyleaf pondweed dies back in mid summer, the dead plant materials gather along shorelines and often followed by an increase in phosphorus and undesirable algal blooms.

Dispersal mechanisms:

Most likely spread overland by recreational boating as the plant wraps around propellers. Currently curlyleaf pondweed is sold widely in pet shops and via the Internet as an aquarium plant. Individuals frequently discard aquarium plants into nearby retention ponds and rivers hence contributing to dispersal.

What You Can Do:

- Learn to identify Curlyleaf pondweed
- Inspect and remove aquatic plants and animals from boat, motor and tailer
- Drain lake or river water from live well and bilge

Know the rules!

Specimens are needed to confirm sightings, but some jurisdictions prohibit or discourage possession and transport of Curlyleaf pondweed and other invasive aquatic plants and animals. Contact the nearest Ministry of Environment office or call the TIP line at 1-800-667-7561 or Ron Hlasny, Aquatic Biologist with Fish and Wildlife Branch at 1-306-953-3242. Unauthorized introduction of plants or fish into the wild is illegal. Protect your property and our waters.