

Adirondack Park Invasive Plant Program

Invasive Plant Profile

Water Chestnut

Trapa natans

Biology:

An annual, fast growing, floating aquatic plant that can grow up to 16 feet long. Leaves are triangular and toothed. Flowers with 4 white petals are produced in July. Thorny, black nutlets with terminal barbs mature in late July and are easily dispersed by water. Seeds may remain viable in the sediment for one to five or more years. A true annual, Water Chestnut overwinters entirely by seed.

Habitat:

Requires full sunlight and a soft substrate. Plants can survive on mudflats but normally grow in water several cm to 2 meters deep. High nutrient waters and neutral to alkaline pH are preferred.

Origin:

Native to temperate southern Europe and Asia.

NY and Adirondack Range:

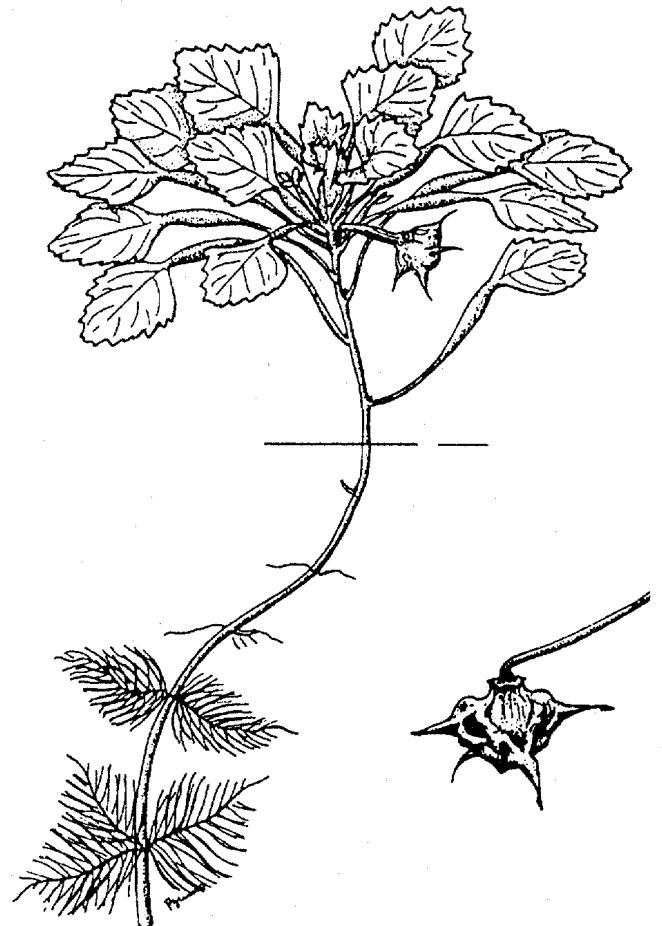
The lower Mohawk River, the Hudson River from the Mohawk to Iona Island, and Watervliet Reservoir near Albany. In the Adirondack Park, only Lake Champlain.

Spread:

Introduced into Collins Lake (near Scotia, NY) in 1884 as an ornamental. Plant fragments can float long distances and establish new colonies. The nutlets/seeds are transported when they attach to the feathers of waterfowl.

Problems:

Mats of Water Chestnut plants can cover large expanses of water. Submerged native aquatic plants are reduced due to shading. Infestations can make boating, fishing, and swimming difficult or impossible. Rapid sedimentation may occur in Water Chestnut areas due to trapping of silt. Rapid decomposition of plants at the end of summer can reduce dissolved oxygen levels. Seeds can cause painful injury when stepped on.



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