



# Aquatic Nuisance Series: Sago Pondweed

Sago pondweed (*Potamogeton pectinatus*) is a native plant that is found all over the world. Sago is an extremely important aquatic plant in lakes and ponds because of its nutritional value as a food source for birds and other animals. Sago beds provide habitat for a large number of invertebrates, which are a source of food for young waterfowl.

## Description and Habitat

Sago pondweed is a submerged aquatic plant about 1-3 feet long. Its thread-like leaves are smooth and not much wider than its slender stems, ending at a sharp point. It can resemble a grassy meadow under the water or form masses at the water's surface.

Sago pondweed will be one of the first grass-like plants to emerge in the spring. It peaks during the summer and dies back before many other plants in New Jersey lakes.



Photo: Illinois Wildflowers, John Hilty

The flowers of sago pondweed are on spikes and develop during the summer. The flowers are very tiny and greenish, and grow in several whorls along the flower spike. The flower is the only part of the plant that will present above the surface of the water; it has no floating leaves.

## Management and Control

Sago pondweed can provide many benefits to the lakes and ponds it thrives in, but because of its prolific growth, it can become dominant in a lake and crowd out other species. It can also become so dense that recreational boating and swimming can be affected.

Irrigation canals and intakes are often hampered by sago pondweed. It can reach the point where sago interferes with the delivery of water in irrigation ditches. It can also clog intakes at reservoirs.

For recreational lakes, sago pondweed becomes an issue when it reaches sufficient density to affect swimming and boating. Fortunately, there are many options to limit and control sago pondweed. Lake managers should use caution when removing sago since non-native invasives may take over and offer less benefit to your lake's environment.

Mechanical removal or hand pulling will work well to clear a specific spot, but may have to be repeated as sago reestablishes. The plant is too thin to cut and harvest, so a rake works best.

If your shallow lake or pond has a severe infestation of sago, many chemical options will work. It is best to check with your lake management professional to determine the best chemical to treat with as other plants may be affected. Consideration should also be given to any non-native species in the vicinity as these may establish in the area formerly dominated by sago.

If you can tolerate the sago pondweed in your lake, it is best to leave it in place. It is a native plant that can benefit the entire ecosystem of your lake. Chemical control should only be done as a last resort.

## Additional Resources

[https://plants.usda.gov/factsheet/pdf/fs\\_stpe15.pdf](https://plants.usda.gov/factsheet/pdf/fs_stpe15.pdf)

<https://www.aquaticbiologists.com/sago-pondweed/>