



Aquatic Nuisance Series: Narrow-Leaf Pondweed

Narrow-leaf pondweed (*Potamogeton pusillus*) is a native aquatic plant in the United States. There are many names for this type of plant and some sources include a few species under the general term narrow-leaf pondweed. Some common names include small pondweed, baby pondweed, flatstem pondweed, and slender pondweed.

This series has a separate article on sago pondweed, so this article will focus on *Potamogeton pusillus* and related narrow-leaf pondweeds. A clear difference in observation is that the Sago pondweed will develop a flower spike that protrudes from the water.

Description and Habitat

Narrow-leaf pondweed is a submerged aquatic plant that can grow up to 10-feet tall, although it is usually much shorter. It is found completely submerged in lakes and only the seeds of some types may protrude from the water. Its linear leaves are an inch or two long and are more rigid than other aquatic plants.



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Starting in July, you will find this type of plant in New Jersey waters. It will grow quickly, forming what look like underwater bushes. It is most commonly found in shallow waters, but can grow in deeper water if the clarity is excellent.

The complex structure of narrow-leaf pondweed provides habitats for a variety of aquatic organisms, from zooplankton to small fish. Fish, small mammals,

and waterfowl will use it as a source of food and nutrients.

Management and Control

Narrow-leaf pondweeds are a native plant, but can be considered invasive due to their ability to quickly dominate their environment in mid-summer. Because of its positive qualities, care should be taken before any attempt at management.



When narrow-leaf pondweed becomes a problem, it is best to start with manual methods of control. Hand-pulling and raking can be very effective as the plant is usually found along the shorelines of a lake. Unlike some other aquatic plants, fragments of pondweed will not propagate as quickly as some non-native species, so there is less risk of removal causing further problems.

If the situation is beyond manual methods, contact your lake management professional. Some common weed control products may not work on this plant. Also, it is important that removal of this native species does not encourage a non-native and more aggressive species to take its place.

Additional Resources

<https://www.premierlakeharvesting.com/blog/2018/8/10/lake-weed-profile-narrow-leaf-pondweed>

<https://www.cleanlakesalliance.org/aquatic-plants/>