



CAUTION: Invasive Species

Water Chestnut

Impact - Water chestnut is a fast-growing floating aquatic invasive plant introduced as an ornamental plant in the 1800's. It colonizes freshwater lakes and slow-moving streams where it negatively impacts ecosystems and water recreation. It is now found in 43 NY counties including Lake Champlain, Lake George, Hudson and Mohawk Rivers. It has been intercepted by our boat stewards. It forms dense mats of rooted vegetation that can be difficult to get through in a boat, canoe or when swimming. The dense mats can cover large expanses of water and shade out native plants. Rapid sedimentation may occur due to the plant trapping silt. Decomposition of these mats reduces dissolved oxygen levels. Property values along infested shorelines may decrease.

How to Identify It is an annual plant with a submerged stem 12-15 ft. long with fine roots that anchor it. Its floating leaves are triangular with saw-toothed edges and hollow, air-filled stems with bulbous bladders. Leaves form a rosette around a central point. Its four petaled white flowers bloom in June. The fruits are hard nuts with barbed/spines. Seeds within these fruits can remain viable for up to 12 years.



How to control - Water chestnut spreads by seed dispersal and also by rosette and fruits detaching from the stem and floating to another area on currents. It also spreads by clinging to floating objects including watercraft. Water chestnut can be controlled using manual and mechanical methods. As with all infestations, early detection is key for containing and controlling spread. Hand pulling when rosettes first appear (mid-June- early July) is an effective way to control. As it is an annual, control methods should commence before seed dispersal. Report any findings to ESSLA.org.