Photo: Dr. Jo Latimore

Life in the "Weeds": Exploring the rarely seen world of aquatic plants

AQUATIC PLANT COMMUNITIES

Native aquatic vegetation benefits lakes by absorbing wave energy, protecting water quality, providing habitat, producing oxygen, taking up nutrients (nutrient cycling), being beautiful, stabilizing shorelines and bottom sediments, and protecting against invasive species and algae competition.

AN UNDERWATER FOREST: TYPES OF VEGETATION

- **Emergent:** often found in the littoral zone near the shoreline and are rooted in the ground with their leaves above the water (ex: common cattail).
- **Floating:** have most or all of their leaves floating freely on the water's surface (ex: fragrant white water lily; right).
- **Submergent:** often grow in shallow water with much of plant growing below the water (ex: common waterweed).

Photo: Monica Seidel

AQUATIC PLANT STEWARDSHIP

- Protect native plants: reduce disturbance and removal, avoid hardening shorelines, and enjoy them!
- Sharpen your identification skills with citizen science communities like iNaturalist.
- Contact your local branch of government or the Invasive Species Centre (Canada) for guidance to properly manage invasive species.
- Download and assess your property using the free "Lake Protection Workbook: A Self-Assessment Tool for Shoreline Property Owners" (watersheds.ca/our-work/resources).
- Additional resources: *Aquatic Plants of the Upper Midwest* by Paul Skawinski, *Through the Looking Glass* by University of Wisconsin Extension.

Join the free Freshwater Stewardship Community!

watersheds.ca/freshwater-stewardship

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