



AMERICAN EELGRASS

Vallisneria americana

Also called tapegrass, wild celery, and water celery.



American eelgrass is a native aquatic plant with ribbon-like and dark-green leaves, and grows below the water surface. It is common throughout Lake Champlain and frequently washes ashore in clumps. It makes for a popular snack among wildlife.

Characteristics:

Vegetative

- Leaf type: linear flat leaf with toothless edges
- Leaf shape: one inch wide/several feet long with rounded tips
 - Leaf arrangement: arise from clusters from roots
 - Leaf position: submerged or sometimes floating

Flower

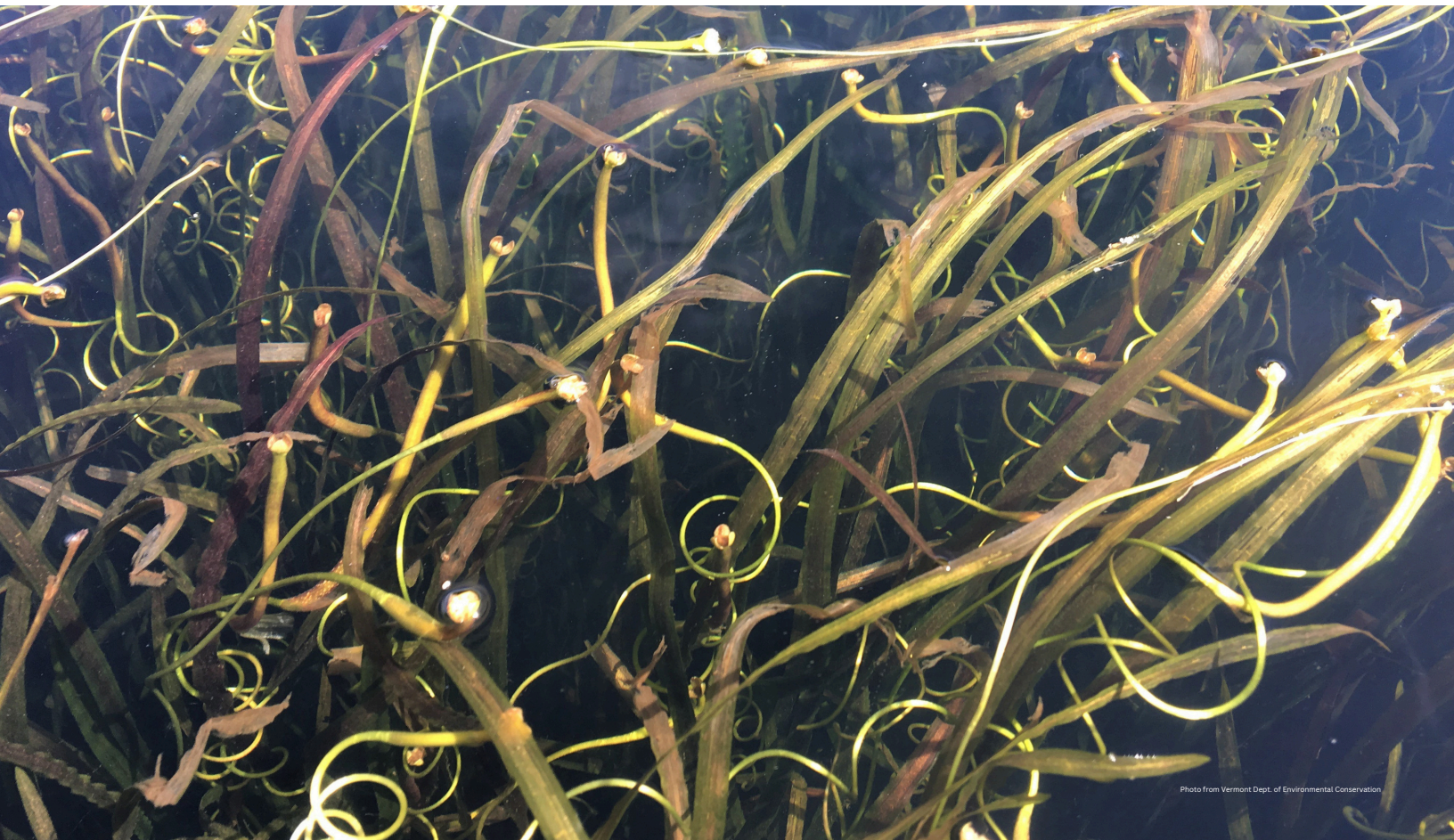
- Female flowers are held by a long, coiled peduncle (flower stalk), which uncoils to lift the flower to the water surface. Male flowers are tiny and produced in a capsule hidden among the leaves at the base of the plant.
- Color: white
- Fruit: banana-like capsule

Seeds

- Many tiny seeds are contained in the fruit

Habitat Preference

Can tolerate sun to part shade.
Grows in mucky soil in water less than about seven feet deep on edges of lakes and ponds
Found in marshes and slow-moving rivers and streams





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Cultural History Notes

- Used as an aquarium plant in fish tanks, and for restoration of lakes, estuaries, and natural areas.

Ecological Contributions to Lake Champlain

Biological

- Provides food and shelter for a wide variety of wildlife, including waterfowl, shorebirds, fish and muskrats.

Chemical

- Helps play a role in biogeochemical processing.

Physical

- Stabilizes sediment.

Similar Species

Turfgrass (multiple species)

- There are multiple different species of turfgrass, including blue-grass, ryegrass, and fine fescue.
- Turfgrass is the most widely grown irrigated crop in the US--more than corn and other food.
- There are some native turfgrasses, but many grasses used in American lawns are non-native.



How to differentiate American eelgrass and turfgrass

- Eelgrass can wash ashore and form mats that resemble grass clippings. The best way to tell them apart is context--if it's in the water or washed on shore away from lawns, it's probably eelgrass!

Scan to learn more about Lake Champlain's native aquatic plants!



The Lake Champlain Committee is a watershed-based nonprofit that uses science-based advocacy, education, and collaborative action to protect and restore water quality, safeguard natural habitats and ensure recreational access in the Lake Champlain Basin.



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