



# COMMON DUCKWEED

*Lemna minor*



Among the smallest of all flowering plants (the smallest on earth is a different species of duckweed), common duckweed is a free-floating native aquatic perennial that forms a floating mat of minute foliage on the water surface. It is dispersed around the world.

## Characteristics:

### Vegetative

- Leaf type: single - 1-8 millimeter long.
- Leaf shape: flat oval (ovate).
- Leaf arrangement: one, two, three or four leaves.
- Leaf position: leaves at top of stem floating on water.

### Flower

- Number of petals/sepals: Almost never seen.
- Color: Green.
- Attachment: in pouch-like sac near leaves.

### Seed

- No seed, reproduce by building new leaf bodies that remain attached which is how they form floating clusters.

## Habitat Preference

Found on the surface of quiet waters of lakes, ponds, marshes, swamps, swales, sloughs and slow-moving streams. Requires water high in nutrients.





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## Cultural History Notes

Common duckweed can be used to remove excess nutrients or toxic metals from water bodies (called phytoremediation) because it is an efficient bio-accumulator, is fast-growing and hardy, and is easily removed from the water after use.

## Ecological Contributions to Lake Champlain

### Biological

- Important food source for aquatic waterfowl and fish.

### Chemical

- Research using duckweed to synthesize insulin and other commercially valuable proteins.

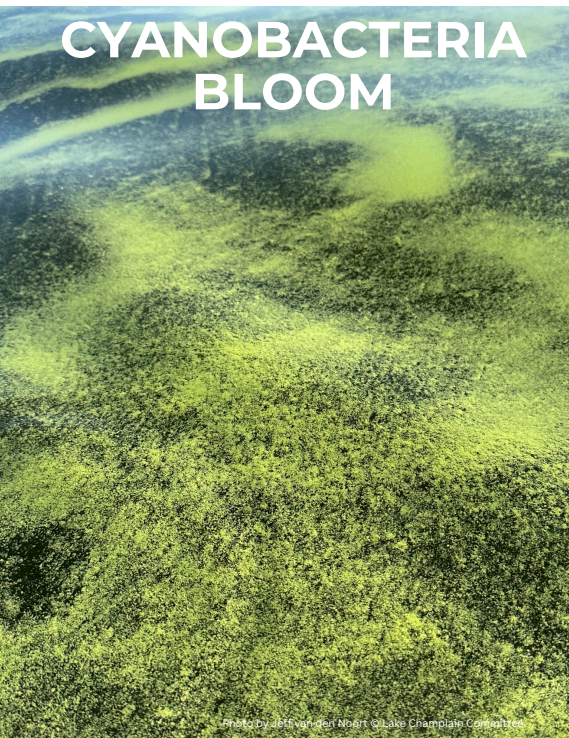
### Physical

- Surface clusters of duckweed provide shade for some fish and other invertebrates. Dense clusters of duckweed can prevent excessive mosquito breeding.

## Similar Species

### Cyanobacteria blooms

- Not a plant species, but a phenomenon that has become common in Lake Champlain.
- Can produce toxins harmful to humans and pets.



CYANOBACTERIA BLOOM



DUCKWEED MAT

### How to differentiate cyanobacteria blooms and duckweed mats

- Cyanobacteria blooms and duckweed mats can be found under similar conditions: warm, shallow, stagnant, and nutrient-rich water. They can occur together.
- Carefully get closer to tell them apart-- duckweed has small floating leaves while cyanobacteria blooms have no plant structure.



DUCKWEED ON A CYANOBACTERIA BLOOM

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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