



PICKERELWEED

Pontederia cordata



Pontederia cordata is a common emergent aquatic plant native to the Eastern US. It is distinguished by its large, waxy leaves and showy purple flowers that point up 2-3 feet above the water's surface. Its large seeds are eaten by ducks and its foliage are eaten by muskrats and deer.

Habitat Preference
Unconsolidated sediments
of marshes, streams,
shallow lakes, and ponds

Characteristics:

Vegetative

- Leaf type: simple.
- Leaf shape: heart-shaped and 60-220 millimeters in length.
- Leaf arrangement: alternate and basal (at the base).
- Leaf position: petioles that extend from the submerged base above the water level.

Flower

- Number of petals/sepals: 6.
- Color: violet to blue.
- Pickerelweed flowers are in bloom for just one day before the fruit develops.

Fruit

- Dry, flattened fruit that is round at cross-section; 4-6 millimeters long, 2-3 millimeters wide.

Seed

- One seed within the fruit.





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Cultural History Notes

- Seeds can be eaten raw, cooked like rice, or dried and ground into a powder.
- Young leafstalks can be eaten raw or cooked.
- Little evidence for pickerelweed as a commonly eaten or staple food.

Ecological contributions to Lake Champlain

Biological

- Insects seek nectar from the flowering pickerelweed, while waterfowl feed on seeds and muskrats, deer, and other mammals feast on foliage.

Chemical

- Root base of the plant covers sediments with a tough vegetative mat which can affect chemical release.

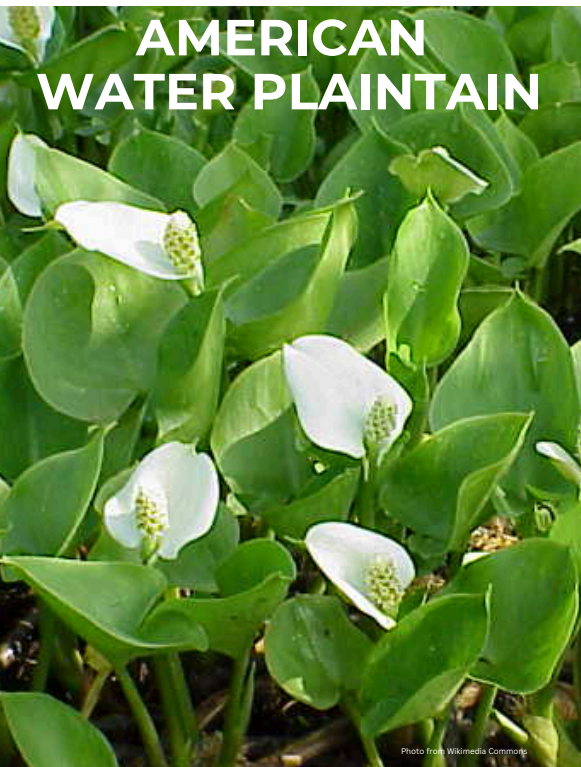
Physical

- The pickerelweed's stems and leaves act as a buffer to protect and stabilize the lakeshore. While there is no direct tie to its namesake fish the pickerel, fish and small birds and mammals use the foliage of the pickerelweed for covered shelter.

Similar Species

American water plantain (*Alisma subcordatum*)

- Native aquatic plant that grows to a similar height and in a similar habitat as pickerelweed.
- Has long-petioled leaves in a clump with a flowering stem rising among them.



How to differentiate American water plantain and pickerelweed

- When in flower, the two plants are distinct in flower color and shape
- When not in flower, the leaves are similar in shape and texture. For pickerelweed, look for petioles in which the stalk joins a leaf to a stem.

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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