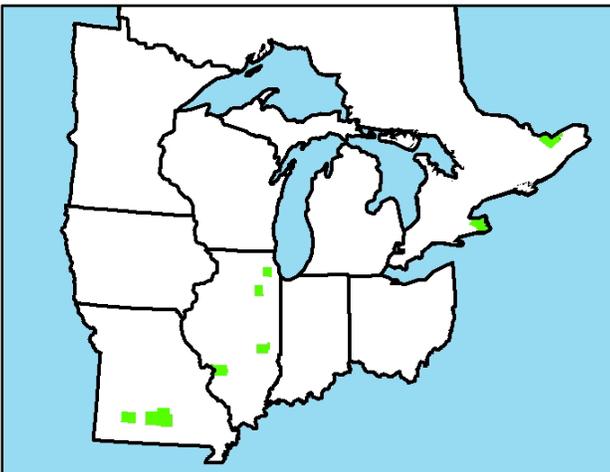


WATER LETTUCE

Pistia stratiotes

Description: Water lettuce is a free-floating aquatic herb that resembles a head of lettuce. Its roots are long and feathery, hanging below the floating leaves. Leaves form in rosettes, have no leaf stems, and grow up to 6 inches long. They are soft, thick, velvety-hairy, a dull light green color, and have ridged veins. Flowers are inconspicuous, forming on small thick stalks in the leaf axils. Its fruit is a green berry. Water lettuce spreads by producing secondary rosettes.



Current Midwest Distribution, including Ontario

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not Known | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Isolated |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Locally Abundant | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Widespread |

Ecological threat: Water lettuce can grow in large mats that clog waterways and degrade water quality. Large mats block the air-water interface, reducing water oxygen levels and negatively impacting fish populations. Water lettuce mats also displace native plant communities and block sunlight from reaching submersed aquatic plants.

Water lettuce is sold in the **aquatic plant trade**.

Native Range: Believed to be from South America or Africa. Some experts believe water lettuce is native to the southern US; it was observed in Florida as early as 1765.

Current North American Range: Water lettuce is found in about 20 states from Florida to California. It is present in Illinois and Missouri.

Photo credits: Left - USDA APHIS PPQ Archive, USDA APHIS PPQ, Bugwood.org; Top & bottom right - Allison Fox, University of Florida/IFAS

**Early detection and rapid response can help
stop the spread!**