



LOWER TRENT CONSERVATION

The Simple Guide to ... **Water Soldier**

2016

Water soldier (*Stratiotes aloides*) is an invasive perennial herb aquatic plant, native to Europe and northwest Asia. This cold tolerant plant grows in standing or slow flowing water bodies, and will establish in water depths up to 5 meters. The first wild population in North America was discovered in 2008 in the Trent River near the hamlet of Trent River. Water soldier is used as an ornamental plant in water gardens and aquariums; it is possible that it was introduced to the Trent River through aquarium or water garden releases.

Identifying Water Soldier

Water soldier has a similar appearance to an aloe plant, a spider plant or the top of a pineapple. For most of the year the plant is submerged underwater, until new leaves of spring and summer are produced. These leaves contain air pockets, which force the plant to the water's surface. As the leaves mature they become waterlogged and the plant sinks below the water's surface for the fall and winter months.

The sword-shaped (lanceolate) leaves are bright green and can grow up to 40 cm long. They are arranged in a circle which forms a rosette shape which flowers in mid-summer months. These flowers are white with three petals that develop into berry-like fruits. 24 seeds are encapsulated in these fleshy berries.

As water soldier matures they produce offsets, which resemble the mature plants, but smaller. These offsets are then detached from the parent plant and are carried downstream to root in new locations, causing water soldier to spread throughout the water body.

Impacts of Water Soldier

- Forms dense mats of floating vegetation, which can interfere with recreational water activities
- Out shades native aquatic plants, causing a decrease in biodiversity.
- Can cut swimmer and individuals who handle the plant.
- Believed to change water chemistry which can harm phytoplankton and other organic organisms.

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What You Can Do To Help

- Learn how to identify water soldier and the precautions to discontinue spreading.
- Take a digital photo and report your sighting to the Invasive Species Hotline (1-800-563-7711) or through EDDMapS Ontario mobile App (<http://www.eddmaps.org/ontario/>).
- When boating, avoid areas where water soldier is known to occur. If you must go through these areas reduce boat speed. The boat wake can dislodge plants and offsets allowing them to spread in new areas.
- Inspect your boat, trailer and equipment after use; remove any organisms that you see.
- Avoid planting water soldier in your water garden and aquarium.
- Never collect plants from the wild for ornamental plants.
- Select water garden sites that are isolated from potential flooding situations.



Invasive Species Website: www.invadingspecies.com
Ontario Invasive Plant Council: ontarioinvasiveplants.ca



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