



Whatcom Weeds

Whatcom County Noxious Weed Control Board 901 W. Smith Road Bellingham WA 98226
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CURLY-LEAF PONDWEED

Potamogeton crispus

THREAT: Curly-leaf pondweed is a Eurasian native, which is now found nearly worldwide. It can become invasive, forming dense surface mats that choke out native plants and affect recreational uses. Since it starts growing earlier in the spring than most native pondweeds, it can often outcompete other plants. Curly-leaf pondweed reproduces by seed, rhizome, plant fragments and turions (hardened stem tips which drop to the sediment), all of which can be dispersed by water, boating equipment or clinging to animals. It grows in still or slow-flowing, shallow to deep, freshwater. Curly-leaf pondweed is tolerant of disturbance, low light and slightly brackish water. It grows best in cool water, going dormant as the water warms. In Washington State, curly-leaf pondweed is a C class noxious weed. It has been found in many sites scattered around the state.



DESCRIPTION: Curly-leaf pondweed is an aquatic perennial. It grows in the early spring, then dies back and goes dormant in the summer. This pondweed grows underwater, with only the flower stalk rising above the surface. The stem is branched and somewhat flattened, growing up to 6 feet in length. The olive-green to reddish-brown leaves are distinctive, having wavy, serrated edges. Leaves are ¼ to ½ inch wide and 1 to 4 inches long. Tiny brownish flowers are borne in spikes on stems 3 inches long. Bur-like turions are produced at the stem tips. Turions germinate in late summer or fall.

MANAGEMENT OPTIONS: As with all aquatic plants, control can be difficult, if not impossible. To prevent the spread of this, and other, aquatic weeds, all boats and equipment should be inspected before being moved between water bodies. Curly-leaf pondweed can be at least partially controlled using cultural, mechanical and chemical control. Drawdowns or dredging can be used to achieve some control. Raking, cutting and harvesting can be used to clear plants out of impacted water bodies, although the plants regrow. There is some evidence that turion production may be prevented or lessened through early season cutting of plants at the sediment level. Since curly-leaf pondweed grows early in the season, herbicide control can be used before many of the native plants start growing, to lessen the impact on desirable species. To be effective, control work must be continued, as needed, throughout several growing seasons. Contact the weed control board for chemical recommendations.



Photo: Robert H. Mohlenbrock @ USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database /USDA NRCS. 1995. *Northeast wetland flora: Field office guide to plant species*. Northeast National Technical Center, Chester, PA.