



# Whatcom Weeds

Whatcom County Noxious Weed Control Board 901 W. Smith Road Bellingham WA 98226  
(360) 715-7470 [www.co.whatcom.wa.us/publicworks/weeds](http://www.co.whatcom.wa.us/publicworks/weeds)

## PONDWEED

### *Potamogeton* species

**THREAT:** The pondweeds are a group of aquatic plants, with about 80 species worldwide. There are several species that occur in Washington State, both native and introduced. Curly leaf pondweed, introduced from Eurasia, can sometimes become a problem. Pondweeds reproduce by seed, and most also spread by rhizomes. Additionally, some can reproduce by tubers or winter buds. Pondweeds provide food and habitat for aquatic animals and are an important food source for waterfowl. The pondweeds that occur in this area are mainly found in still or slow moving freshwater, although some are tolerant of brackish conditions. Although sometimes considered a nuisance by those who do not want vegetation in certain water bodies, the native pondweeds fill an important niche and provide wildlife habitat.

**DESCRIPTION:** The pondweeds in this area are perennial aquatic plants, most commonly occurring in ponds and lakes. Depending on the species, the plants may be entirely submerged or may have floating vegetation; leaves may be linear, ovate or lance-shaped, and small to large. Most pondweeds have small, inconspicuous flowers in clusters on small spikes. Roots are fibrous, often producing rhizomes and/or tubers. Pondweeds grow at a variety of depths, again depending on species. Whatcom County has at least 12 species of pondweed. Some of the more common species in our area are floating-leaved pondweed, big-leaf pondweed, grass-leaved pondweed and sago pondweed. Curly leaf pondweed occurs in Wiser Lake. Hybridization does occur between pondweeds that can further complicate identification. For assistance in identifying aquatic plants, contact the weed control board.

**MANAGEMENT OPTIONS:** In a natural setting, control of the native pondweeds should not be necessary. If control is desired, it is important to correctly identify the plant species. Like all aquatic plants, control is difficult and eradication may be unrealistic. Plants will always colonize bodies of water, so control must be ongoing. Manual removal will clear the water for a short time but all plant parts must be removed to prevent further spread of the pondweed. Aquatic herbicide applications in Washington State must be done through a licensed herbicide applicator. Contact the weed control board for further information. To prevent the spread of any aquatic plants, trailers, boats and fishing gear should be carefully inspected to avoid transporting plant materials between water bodies.



American pondweed



sago pondweed



floating-leaved pondweed

Photographs courtesy of J.M. DiTomaso