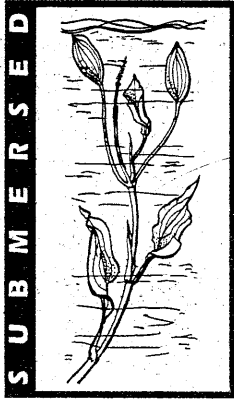


Myriophyllum spicatum (MIR-ee-o-FILL-um spi-KAY-tum)

Eurasian water milfoil

Myriophyllum – (Gk.) *myrio*: many + *phyllon*: leaf; *spicatum* – (L.) pointed, spiked



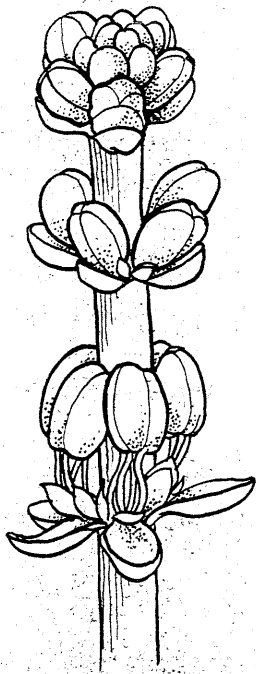
Eurasian water milfoil has made quite a name for itself. Its likeness shows up in newspapers, on bumper stickers, billboards and public service announcements. A plant that can grow as swiftly and tenaciously as this one gets people's attention. You could say Eurasian water milfoil is a real "growth business."

Description: Eurasian water milfoil has long, spaghetti-like stems, sometimes 2 or more meters in length, that emerge from roots and rhizomes.

Stems often branch repeatedly at the water's surface, creating a canopy of floating stems and foliage. Leaves are divided like a feather, with a short stalk and about 14-20 pairs of thread-like leaflets. The leaf divisions are all about the same length and closely spaced, resembling the bones on a fish spine. Leaves are in whorls of 4-5, and can be widely spaced (1-3 cm or more). The flower spike sticks out of the water with whorls of flowers in the axils of short bracts. The fruit (2-3 mm) has four parts with a smooth to slightly roughened surface.



leaf
divisions
life-size



flower
spike
6 x life-size

Similar species: There are seven other species of water milfoil in this region, which are all native (see discussion under

Myriophyllum heterophyllum). Eurasian water milfoil most closely resembles northern water milfoil (*Myriophyllum sibiricum*). The most reliable way to distinguish between them is by the number of leaf divisions. Eurasian water milfoil usually has more than 14 pairs of leaflets, whereas northern water milfoil has less than 14 (usually 5-12). The presence or absence of winter buds in late summer is also a helpful characteristic. Northern water milfoil produces winter buds, but Eurasian water milfoil does not.

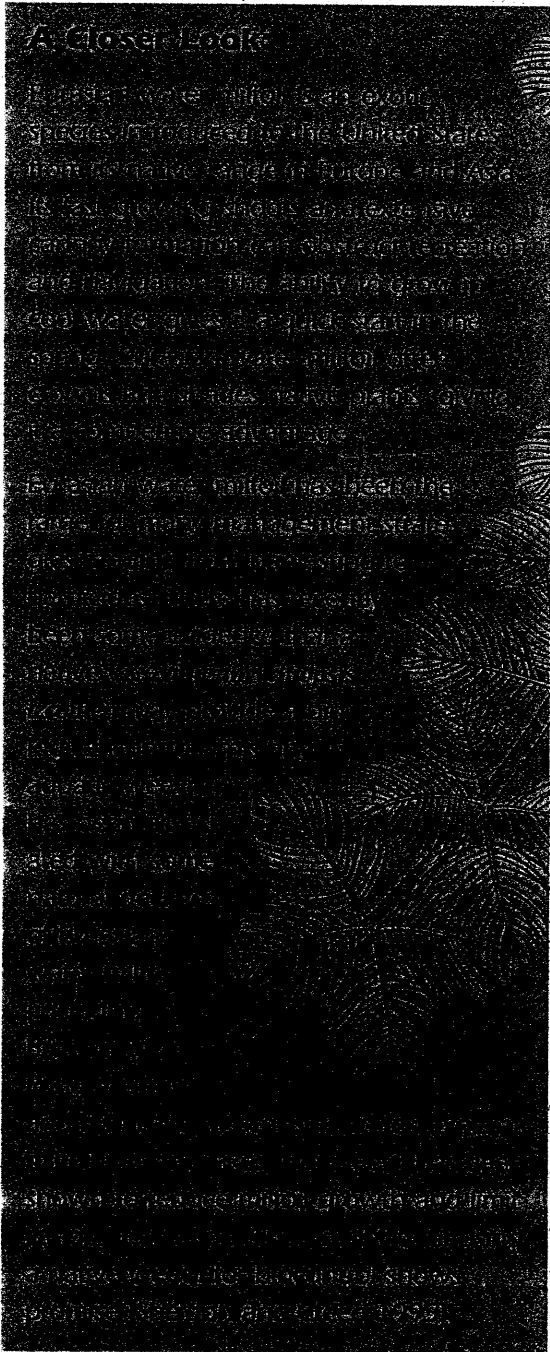
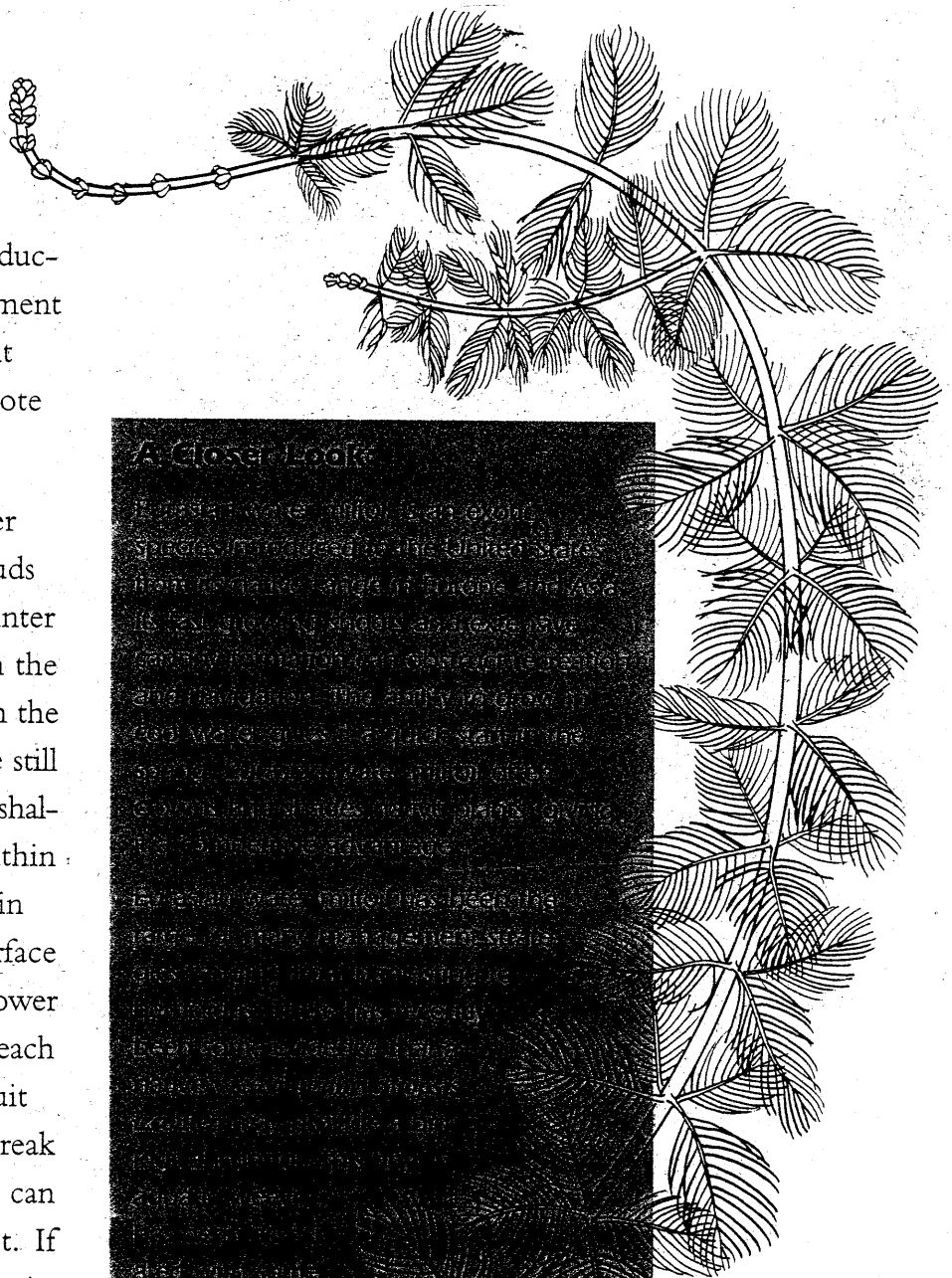
Although individual plants of these two species may look similar, their growth form is quite different. Northern water milfoil doesn't typically form a branched canopy at the water's surface and it grows in a more controlled manner with slower stem growth and less fragmentation.

Origin & Range: Exotic, originated in Europe and Asia; distribution in Wisconsin is primarily in the south, but spreading north; range includes most of U.S.

Habitat: Eurasian water milfoil is usually found in water 1 to 4 meters deep. It can grow in a variety of sediments, but is most productive in fine textured, inorganic sediment (Barko and Smith 1986). Low light and high water temperatures promote canopy formation.

Through the Year: Eurasian water milfoil does not produce winter buds or tubers. Some shoots may overwinter and others develop from sprouts on the rootstalk. Growth can begin early in the spring when water temperatures are still cool (about 59°F). Plants growing in shallow water can reach the surface within a few weeks, while those growing in deeper water may not reach the surface until late in the growing season. Flower stalks don't develop until the stems reach the surface. After flowering and fruit production, portions of the stems break apart in fragments. These fragments can float to new locations and take root. If the first flowering cycle occurs early in the growing season, it may be repeated again in the fall (Smith and Barko 1990).

Value in the Aquatic Community: Waterfowl graze on fruit and foliage to a limited extent. Milfoil beds provide invertebrate habitat, but studies have shown mixed stands of pondweeds and wild celery have higher diversity and numbers of invertebrates (Engel 1990).



life-size

