



Water Chestnut

Trapa natans

History

- * Introduced to U.S. before 1879 by a gardener in Cambridge, Massachusetts, who planted it in several ponds
- * Native to warm temperate regions of Eurasia

Characteristics

- * Rooted, annual, aquatic plant with submerged and surface leaves
- * Surface leaves are waxy and triangular with toothed edges
- * Submerged leaves are feathery and whorled around the leaf stalk
- * Stems can grow up to 16 ft (4.8 m) long
- * Forms dense, floating mats
- * White flowers
- * Nut-like fruit with 2-4 spines

Habitat

- * Lakes, ponds, slower sections of rivers and streams
- * Prefers nutrient-rich water with a neutral to slightly alkaline pH
- * Can grow in water up to 16.5 ft (5 m) deep, but prefers shallow water (1-6.5 ft, 0.3-2.0 m)

Known Distribution

- * Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Quebec, Rhode Island, Vermont

Impacts

- * Dense, floating mats restrict light availability, reduce the oxygen content, and displace other emergent and floating vegetation
- * Impedes boating, fishing, swimming and other recreational activities

