

Eurasian watermilfoil
(*Myriophyllum spicatum*)

Currently in Montana, noxious weed infest about 8.2 million acres. Many of the state listed noxious weeds were brought to America as ornamentals for gardens, medicinal purposes, by accident in discarded soil from a ship's ballast, or unintentionally in bags of seed brought from other parts of the world. Whatever the cause of introduction, these non-native plant species have found their way onto Montana's state listed noxious weed list.

Eurasian watermilfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*) or EWM is native to Europe, Asia, and North Africa. EWM is a submerged aquatic plant that grows in still or slow moving water. Introduced to North America in the 1940's, EWM has spread rapidly in lakes, ponds, streams, and rivers. EWM is now found in much of North America. Eurasian watermilfoil has the ability to establish in areas where native aquatic vegetation is not well established; here it crowds out native vegetation and spreads quickly. EWM is able to spread rapidly because new infestation can begin from fragments or pieces of the plant. EWM has become a threat to native flora and fauna as well as water recreational activities due to the dense floating mats that infestations create. EWM is a submerged plant that has slender stems that typically grow up to 9' long but can be longer in suitable growing conditions. Flowers of EWM are red to pink and are inconspicuously produced in the leaf axils on a spike that grows vertically above the surface of the water. The leaves are submerged, grow in whorls of four, are feather-like, and have 12 to 21 pairs of thread-like leaflets. There are several types of native milfoil that occur in North America and it is easy to confuse these native milfoils with the invasive EWM. You can determine the difference between native northern milfoil and EWM because northern milfoil typically has fewer than 12 pairs of thread-like leaflets on each leaf and leaves are held more erect when out of the water as compared to EWM, whose leaves collapse against the stem when held out of the water. Identification can be so difficult that DNA analysis is often needed to determine identity. The most common way that EWM is spread is through distribution by watercraft. Even the smallest fragment of an EWM plant can be carried to a new, un-infested location and establish a new infestation. As a responsible outdoor recreationist, remember the phrase, "Inspect. Clean. Dry."

Please take a few moments to learn about noxious weeds. If noxious weeds are not currently a problem in your area, they may be in the near future. For more information about Montana's state listed noxious weeds, regulated plants, or weed species listed on your county weed list, please contact your local county weed district (can list weed district name here... ex: Lewis & Clark County Weed District) at _(406)_(Phone number)_. Or you can contact the Montana Department of Agriculture at (406) 444-5600.