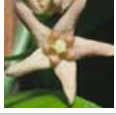




Invasive Plant Atlas of New England

Catalog of Species Search Results



[:: Catalog of Species Search](#)



Pistia stratiotes

(Water lettuce)

[Common Name\(s\)](#) | [Full Scientific Name](#) | [Family Name Common](#) | [Family Scientific Name](#) | [Images](#) | [Synonyms](#) | [Description](#) | [Similar Species](#) | [Reproductive/Dispersal Mechanisms](#) | [Distribution](#) | [History of Introduction in New England](#) | [Habitats in New England](#) | [Threats](#) | [Early Warning Notes](#) | [Management Links](#) | [Documentation Needs](#) | [Additional Information](#) | [References](#) | [Data Retrieval](#) | [Maps of New England Plant Distribution](#)

COMMON NAME

Water lettuce

FULL SCIENTIFIC NAME

Pistia stratiotes L.

FAMILY NAME COMMON

Arum family

FAMILY SCIENTIFIC NAME

Araceae

IMAGES



Habit



Flower Close-up



Vegetative
Reproduction

NOMENCLATURE/SYNONYMS

Synonyms: None

DESCRIPTION

Botanical Glossary

Pistia stratiotes is a free-floating aquatic with feathery roots that can reach up to 50 cm (19.7 in.) in length. The fleshy leaves of this plant are arranged in a rosette and measure 2-15 cm (0.75-6 in.) in length. The leaves are green to grayish-green, and have dense white hairs and parallel veins on their surface. As its common name indicates, the plant resembles a floating head of lettuce.

Pistia stratiotes flowers in the late summer, but the flowers plant are small and inconspicuous. The male and female flowers are arranged in an inflorescence type known as a spadix, with 6-8 male flowers in a single whorl around the center and one female flower below. The spathe, a bract-like leaf surrounding the spadix, is white to pale green, glabrous on the inside and pubescent on the outside. The fruits of this plant are light green berries that contain light brown seeds that are cylindrical in shape and measure 1 mm (0.04 in.).

Page References Bailey 180, Magee & Ahles 306. See reference section below for full citations.

SIMILAR SPECIES

None

REPRODUCTIVE/DISPERSAL MECHANISMS

Pistia stratiotes reproduces primarily vegetatively by means of daughter plants attached to stolons. The daughter plants have the potential to break off from the parent plant and be moved via water currents or boats to start new populations. It can also reproduce sexually via seeds.

DISTRIBUTION

The nativity of this plant is not known. It was reported as being in Florida in 1765 by William Bartram. However, it could also be native to South America or Africa. In the United States this plant is mainly found in the southeast from Florida west to Texas. There have been outlying populations reported from as far west as California and Hawaii and as far north as New York and New Jersey, which are assumed to be introductions.

HISTORY OF INTRODUCTION IN NEW ENGLAND

This plant has not yet been reported as naturalized from New England, but has been reported in neighboring New York. It was reported early on from Florida (in 1765), which could indicate that it is native there. However, it could also have been brought via ship ballast by the early colonizers of this country. In New England it is often introduced intentionally into ponds and streams for decorative purposes. Since this plant is sensitive to frost, it dies back in the

winter and is often reintroduced each year.

HABITATS IN NEW ENGLAND

Aquatic
Lake or Pond
Roadside
Yard or Garden

Pistia stratiotes is most often found in slow-moving or still water, such as lakes, ponds and reservoirs. It is also often found in water gardens and aquaria.

THREATS

Pistia stratiotes has the ability to crowd out native aquatic plants, as well as to make infested water bodies inhospitable to different animals. For example, the coverage of plants on the water surface can reduce the oxygen available for fish in the water below. It also impedes recreational activities such as boating and swimming. Since this plant can spread vegetatively, it has the potential to spread via boats and water currents. It is sold in the aquarium and water garden trade, which could be a threat if the plants are not disposed of carefully. There is concern that with repeated introductions the plant could become less sensitive to frost, and eventually be able to sustain persistent populations in New England.

EARLY WARNING NOTES

Pistia stratiotes is not yet established in New England. Any sightings of this plant should be reported immediately.

MANAGEMENT LINKS

[Texas Agricultural Extension Service - Aquaplant](#)

DOCUMENTATION NEEDS

Documentation required: Photograph of plant
Best time for documentation: Summer, early fall

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

[Integrated Taxonomic Information System](#)
Taxonomic information

[PLANTS Database](#)
General information and map

[Flora of North America](#)

Extensive descriptive information and maps

[Center for Aquatic and Invasive Plants, University of Florida](#)

Extensive information, including description, photographs, and control information

[Texas Agricultural Extension Service - Aquaplant](#)

Photograph, drawing and general information

[Pacific Island Ecosystems at Risk \(PIER\)](#)

Information about the threat of this species

[USGS Nonindigenous Aquatic Plant Distribution Information](#)

Map with records of this plant in the United States

[Invasive.org](#)

Additional images of water lettuce

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DATA RETRIEVAL

Select a task by clicking the radio button and then click "Submit Selection."

- Formatted display as table
- Export as comma-delimited text file

MAPS OF PLANT DISTRIBUTION IN NEW ENGLAND

Select a study area by clicking the radio button and then click "Submit Selection."

- The whole New England area
- One or more states
- One or more counties
- One or more towns (county sub-divisions)

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