

INVASIVE SPECIES ALERT!



Water Lettuce (*Pistia stratiotes*)

HAVE YOU SEEN THIS PLANT?

DESCRIPTION

- An aquatic, perennial or annual native to South America.
- Free-floating rosettes resemble heads of lettuce, up to 30 cm in diameter.
- Plants appear singly or with many brittle stolon offshoots of daughter plants (up to 4.6 m long), forming dense, floating mats.
- Leaves are 2-20 cm long, rounded with ruffled margins, light green to grey green, with obvious parallel veins, short white hairs and a spongy base.
- Dense, feathery roots extend 50-80 cm below the water surface and remain detached from the substrate.
- Flowers are tiny and inconspicuous appearing off leaf axils on short, fleshy stalks. A whorl of 3-9 male flowers grows above a single female flower.
- Produces a small, seedy green berry that turns brown at maturity.



Image: Terry Maniwa

Parent and daughter plants

PRIMARY THREATS: Degrade water quality and flow, reduce biodiversity and water access, bioaccumulate heavy metals creating toxic conditions, and increase mosquito habitat.



Water Lettuce Infestation

Image: B.C. Government

BIOLOGY & SPREAD

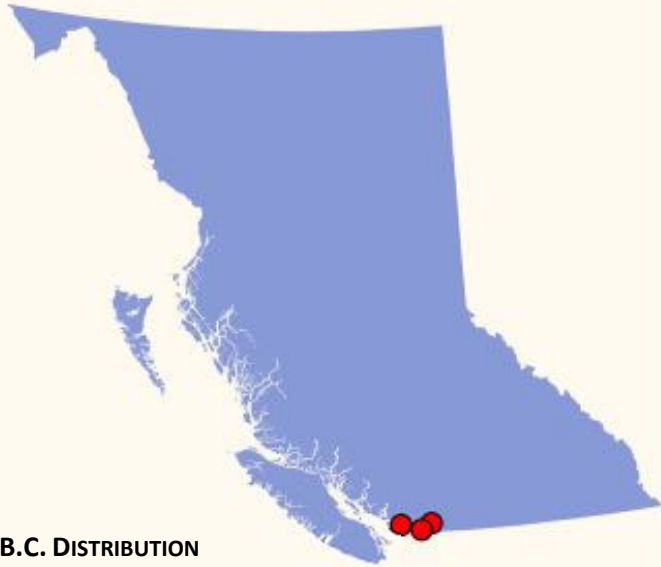
- Reproduces by seed but mainly vegetatively with daughter plants connected by stolons (up to four generations interconnected).
- A single population can double in less than three weeks.
- Seeds float for 1-2 days before sinking to germinate then resurfacing once the primary leaf has formed.
- Local dispersal by water currents and watercraft.
- Long distance dispersal by nursery trade and improper disposal of aquarium or pond plants.



B.C. Government
Invasive Plants



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B.C. DISTRIBUTION
WATER LETTUCE
AUGUST 2026

REPORT INVASIVE SPECIES

Download the App!



www.gov.bc.ca/invasive-species

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- **REPORT** sightings.
- **CHOOSE** only non-invasive plants for your water garden.
- **DISPOSE** of aquarium, pond and water garden plant waste in a dryland compost or landfill.
- **CLEAN, DRAIN, DRY** all watercraft, waders, and other water equipment on site after each use:
<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/invasive-mussels/clean-drain-dry>

DISTRIBUTION & Status

- Management goal is provincial eradication in open waterways.
- Monitoring treated populations in three open waterways in southwest B.C.

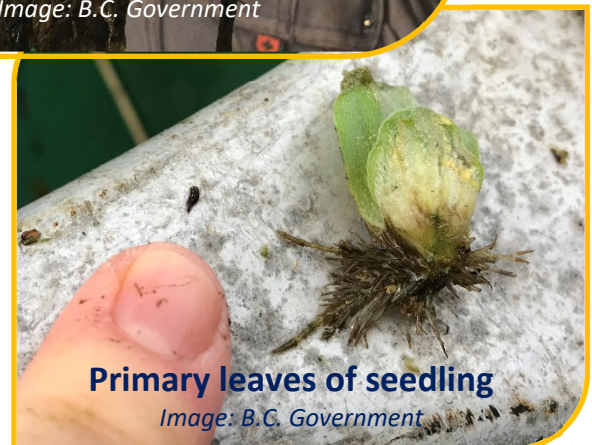
HABITAT

- Grows in freshwater ponds, ditches, wetlands, lakes, and slow-moving rivers.
- It can survive on saturated soil for extended periods but is sensitive to frost and saline conditions.



Free-floating plants connected by stolons

Image: B.C. Government



Primary leaves of seedling

Image: B.C. Government



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