

## Exotic Aquatic Plant Watch

*Are invasive plants threatening your lake?*

### Aren't plants good for a lake?

Rooted aquatic plants are a natural and essential part of the lake, just as grasses, shrubs and trees are a natural part of the land. However, sometimes a lake is invaded by an aquatic plant species that is not native to Michigan. Some of these exotic plants, like Curly-leaf pondweed, Eurasian milfoil, Starry stonewort, and European frog-bit can be extremely disruptive to a lake's ecosystem and recreational activities.

These exotic plants can take over a lake by crowding out beneficial native plant species. An overabundance of exotic species can also negatively affect fish populations and human recreation.

### What steps are needed to prevent exotic plants from taking over?

To avoid having a lake invaded and overrun with exotic plants, the Exotic Aquatic Plant Watch of the Cooperative Lakes Monitoring Program (CLMP) teaches volunteers how to use the five Integrated Pest Management (IPM) strategies:

#### 1. Monitoring

The critical step in slowing the spread of exotic plants is to find them before they spread out across the lake. Through the Exotic Aquatic Plant Watch, a plant expert from MiCorps teaches volunteers how to sample their lake for exotic plants and how to identify them. Participants also have the opportunity to email pictures of unknown plant samples to MiCorps for identification.

In a nutshell, the monitoring procedure involves:

- 1) Identifying high risk locations such as public boat launches and inlets on a map.
- 2) Using a sampling rake to collect plant samples at each location.
- 3) Identifying the sampled plants and report any invasive species.

#### 2. Early Detection

Finding the first colonies of an exotic plant invasion will allow for a rapid response to control the plant in small areas before it can spread. If the invasion goes undetected, it may spread throughout the lake. Annual monitoring of your lake for exotic plants helps find any threats before they become an issue.



#### 3. Rapid Response

Responding rapidly to a new invasion of an invasive plant will increase the probability of keeping the plant under control, possibly even eradicating it. Treating small, infested areas will be less expensive and more effective than treating large areas after the plant has spread.

#### 4. Maintenance Control

Annual monitoring and treatment of the exotic plant is time consuming and requires persistence and dedication, but it can keep the exotic plant population at low, manageable levels.

#### 5. Preventive Management

Even if the monitoring does not reveal the presence of exotic plants, the lake community should still continue their monitoring efforts. Remember, the key to preventing abundant exotic plant growth is to find them before they take over the lake.

The lake community should take actions to prevent introductions by educating residents about the threat of exotic species and how to identify them.

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For more information about the MiCorps Cooperative Lakes Monitoring Program, visit [www.MiCorps.net](http://www.MiCorps.net)

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