

Native Aquatic Plants of Lake Tahoe



Andean Milfoil (*Myriophyllum quintense*)

Characteristics: feather-like submersed leaves in whorls of two to four, blue-green emergent leaves, tiny flowers (0.7mm-1.2mm long) with four petals located at base of emergent leaves, may form multiple flower stalks, often flowers in August or September (later than most other milfoils)

Importance: provides habitat of aquatic animals and stabilizes sediment

Photo credit: Jennifer Parsons, Washington State Department of Ecology



Canadian Waterweed commonly known as Elodea (*Elodea canadensis*)

Characteristics: submersed leaves are bright green, translucent, oblong, 6-17 mm long and 1-4 mm broad; small white or pale purple flowers float at the surface

Importance: provides good habitat for many aquatic invertebrates and cover for young fish and amphibians

Photo credit: Christian Fischer



Coontail (*Ceratophyllum demersum*)

Characteristics: floats freely below the surface, no roots, 0.5-4 cm long leaves are forked into 2 flattened segments, leaves often somewhat stiff, leaves arranged in whorls of 5 to 12, tiny submersed green flowers present from June through September

Importance: provides habitat plant for young fish, small aquatic animals, and aquatic insects

Photo credit: Clayton Antieau, Washington State Department of Ecology



Leafy Pondweed (*Potamogeton foliosus*)

Characteristics: linear leaves that are 2-10 cm long and 1-2.5 mm wide, fibrous roots emerging from threadlike rhizomes, flowers have 2-4 whorls on an initially crowded spike (1 cm)

Importance: seeds and vegetation provide cover and food for aquatic animals

Photo credit: Clayton Antieau, Washington State Department of Ecology

Invasive Aquatic Plants of Lake Tahoe



Eurasian Water-milfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum* L.)

Characteristics: long underwater stems, feathery foliage, tolerant to shallow and deep waters, distinguished from native milfoil by threadlike leaflets usually found in pairs of more than 14

Primary Means of Introduction: native to Europe and Asia, present in much of the United States and Canada, spread from lake to lake by boat trailers and aquarium dumping, has been spreading around Lake Tahoe for 15-20 years

Problems: impedes water flow, disrupts navigation, inhibits recreational activities, decreases water quality, reduces plant diversity

Management: physical (hand pulling, harvesting, cutting) and mechanical control

Prevention: clean all vegetation off boats and equipment

Established communities present in Lake Tahoe. Current management techniques controlling populations; eradication is not achievable.

Photo credit: Robert Johnson, Cornell University. Ruthanna Hawkins, Cayuga Lake Watershed Network



Curly Leaf Pondweed (*Pontamogeton crispus* L.)

Characteristics: submersed aquatic plant with oblong blue-green leaves that have very wavy margin, reproduces by turions (see inset)

Primary Means of Introduction: native to Eurasia, Africa, and Australia; has begun to expand rapidly in Lake Tahoe over the past three years; primarily has spread in warm, shallow waters (such as marinas)

Problems: impedes water flow, disrupts navigation, inhibits recreational activities, decreases water quality, reduces plant diversity

Management: physical (hand pulling, harvesting, cutting) and mechanical control

Prevention: clean all vegetation off boats and equipment

Established communities present in Lake Tahoe. Current management techniques controlling populations; eradication is not achievable.

Photo credit: Three Lakes Council, South Salem, New York

Photo credit (inset): Leslie J. Mehrhoff, University of Connecticut

Eurasian water milfoil and curly leaf pondweed populations are highly concentrated in the South basin, near the Tahoe Keys area, with smaller populations throughout the lake. Both plants currently dominate the submersed aquatic plant community, causing increased nutrient pumping from sediment (a cause of decreased water clarity).

The Lake Tahoe Aquatic Invasive Species Working Group (LTAISWG) is currently working to prevent the spread of invasive species in Lake Tahoe. The public is invited to attend LTAISWG meetings and is encouraged to volunteer!

For more information about aquatic invasive species, please go to <http://www.tahoercd.org/index.php/ISP/aquatic>