

CLASPING-LEAF PONDWEEDS

Potamogeton perfoliatus and *Potamogeton richardsonii*

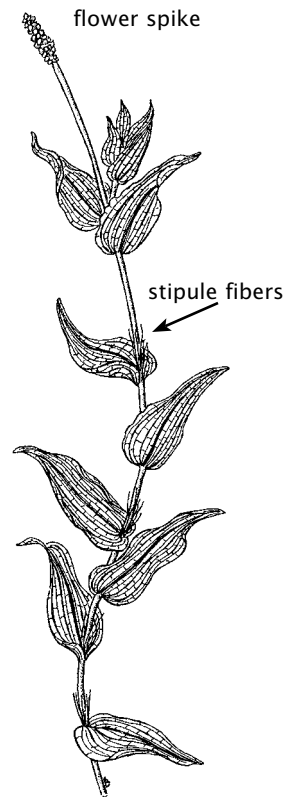
NATIVE TO MAINE

Two *Potamogeton* species found in Maine share the common name “clasping-leaf pondweed”: *Potamogeton perfoliatus* and *Potamogeton richardsonii*. Of the two species, *P. perfoliatus* is more common in Maine. Alternative common names for both species do exist, but are less frequently used. ***P. perfoliatus*** is also called perfoliate pondweed and ***P. richardsonii*** is also called red-head pondweed.

Habitat: Both clasping-leaf pondweeds grow in the submersed plant community. They grow in many types of sediments to depths of up to 4 meters.

Description: Both species have long, branching stems that are rounded in cross-section (1 to 2.5 mm in diameter), emerging from a spreading rhizome. The submerged leaves are alternately arranged, oval to lance-shaped, and clasp the stem with a lobed base. No floating leaves are produced. Fruiting stalks emerge from leaf axils toward the end of the growing season. Clusters of small fruits form in a spike toward the tip. Each fruit is disk-like with an erect beak-like protrusion.

The leaves help to distinguish the two species. The leaves of ***P. richardsonii*** are 3 to 12 cm long with wavy edges, and 13 to 21 veins (some more prominent than others). The more fibrous portions of the stipules persist in the leaf axils, leaving stiff tufts. The bases of the leaves clasp one-half to three-quarters of the way around the stem. The leaves of ***P. perfoliatus*** are generally smaller (1 to 5 cm long) with 7 to 15 veins. The stipules (which only occur on the upper portion of the stem) disintegrate without a trace fairly early in the growing season. The leaf bases clasp all of the way around the stem.



The stipules of *P. richardsonii* disintegrate leaving a tuft of persistent fibers

US Range: Both clasping-leaf pondweeds are native to Maine, New England and other parts of the United States. (*P. perfoliatus* is more common in Maine.)



P. perfoliatus



P. richardsonii

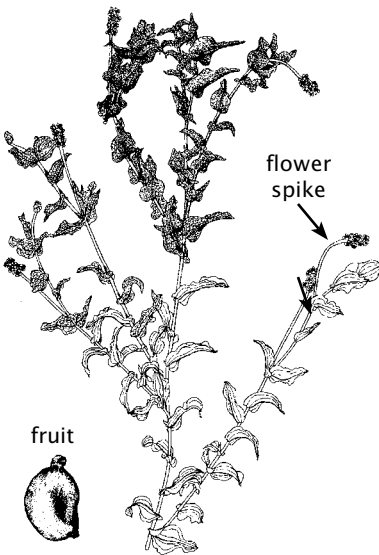
The two species are known to hybridize with each other, and *P. perfoliatus* hybridizes with two other pondweed species as well. All three hybrids occur in Maine.



The leaves of *P. richardsonii* do not clasp all the way around the stem

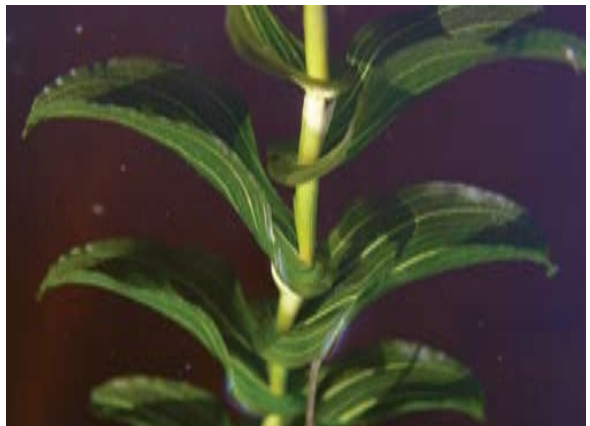
Annual cycle: Clasping-leaf pondweeds are perennials that propagate by spreading rhizomes, and, when conditions are favorable, from seed. Flowers, followed by fruits, appear by mid-summer. Plants die back to their rhizomes at the end of the growing season. New growth emerges from rhizomes and seeds when the water begins to warm in the spring.

Value in the Aquatic Community: The fruits of clasping-leaf pondweeds provide food for ducks and geese. The plants are grazed by muskrat, deer, beaver and moose. The leaves and stems are colonized by macroinvertebrates and provide shelter and foraging opportunities for fish.



P. perfoliatus habit

Look Alikes: May be confused with other species of the *Potamogeton* genus, including curly-leaf pondweed.



The leaves of *P. perfoliatus* clasp all the way around the stem; the stipules disintegrate without a trace