# FANWORT

*Cabomba caroliniana*

## NOT NATIVE TO MAINE – INVASIVE

**Habitat:** Fanwort is found in the submersed and floating-leaved plant communities, growing in a variety of substrates including sand, mud and gravel. It thrives in stagnant or slow moving waters of lakes, pond and streams in depths of up to 2.5 meters. Large mats of drifting fragments may occur.

**Description:** Stems emerge at intervals from slender roots. Fanwort has two distinct leaf types. Submersed leaves are finely divided, widely branched, and held apart from the stem on slender leaf stems, or petioles, and resemble tiny fans with handles. The leaves are strictly arranged in opposite pairs along the main stem. The orderly formation of leaves and stems gives the plant a tubular appearance underwater. Plants range in color from grass green to olive green to reddish. Small oval to elliptical floating leaves, 1 cm long, occur at the surface. They are alternately arranged on slender petioles attached to the center of each leaf. Small white flowers (1 cm in diameter) develop among the floating leaves.

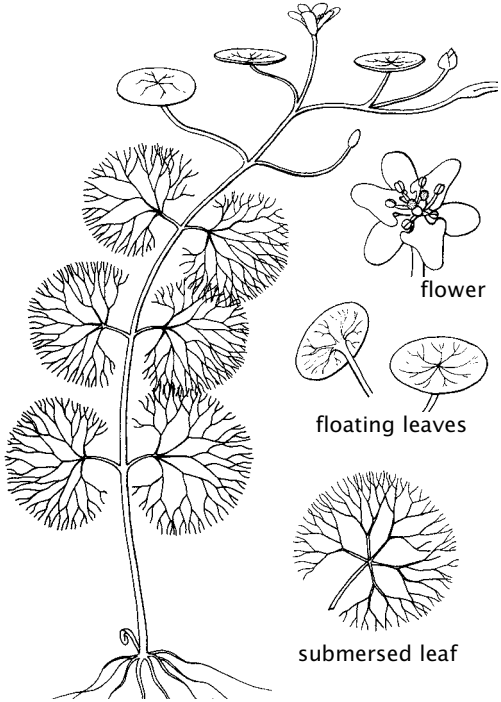
Forming a mat at the surface the submersed leaves may appear robust and resilient; notice the small clusters of floating leaves located near the two flowers

The small flowers have six white petals

**Origin and US Range:** Fanwort is native to South America. The previously held belief that this plant is also native to some parts of the southeastern United States is now under debate. It is not native to New England. An attractive plant, fanwort has long been popular in the aquarium trade. Release from aquaria into the environment is considered to be one of the ways this plant has spread beyond its natural range. Fanwort occurs, and is considered invasive, in many parts of the United States including the nearby states of New Hampshire, Massachusetts, New York, and Rhode Island.

**Annual Cycle:** Fanwort is an aquatic perennial that propagates primarily from stem fragments and root expansion. In the spring, new growth emerges from buried roots and over-wintering stem fragments. Plants grow rapidly to the surface, often forming dense mats. Flowers are produced from May to September. Although fanwort is self-pollinating, seed germination in areas beyond its natural range does not appear to be significant. Both the roots and stems are easily broken as the season progresses, facilitating vegetative spread to new areas.

**Look Alikes:** May be confused with bladderworts, hornworts, mermaid weeds, water crowfoots, and all leafy water-milfoils.




Fanwort has two distinct leaf types

Long leaf stems and strictly opposite arrangement are key features