

## PARROT FEATHER

*Myriophyllum aquaticum*

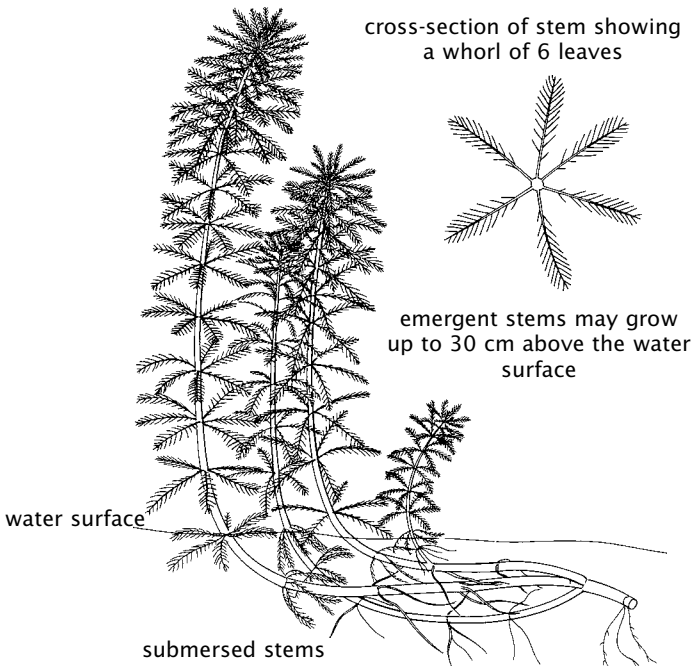
### NOT NATIVE TO MAINE - INVASIVE

*NOTE: All leafy milfoils display a wide range of vegetative variability. Any milfoil found in Maine waters should be considered suspicious until a positive identification has been confirmed by someone with the appropriate expertise.*

**Habitat:** Parrot feather is found in both the emergent and the submersed plant communities of freshwater lakes, ponds, and slow moving streams. It is also adapted to waters with some salt intrusion. While it grows best when rooted in shallow water, it has been known to occur as a floating plant in the deep water of nutrient-enriched lakes. It is well adapted to life at the water's edge and can survive when stranded on dewatered river banks and lake shores.

**Description:** Long unbranched stems arise from roots and rhizomes. Unburied rhizomes function as a support structure for adventitious roots, and provide buoyancy for emergent growth. Emergent stems may grow to a height of 30 cm above the water surface. Slender, feather-divided leaves occur along the trailing stems in whorls of 4 to 6 leaves. Whorls are openly spaced toward the base, and more

closely arranged toward the growing tip. Leaves are 2.5 to 5 cm long, with 10 to 18 leaflet pairs, flattened midribs and a short petiole. The emergent leaves are robust, vibrant green, and covered with a waxy coating. Submersed leaves, in contrast, are limp and brownish, and often in a state of deterioration. Small white flowers (female only) are inconspicuous, and borne in the axils of the emergent leaves.



Parrot feather (*Myriophyllum aquaticum*)

**Origin and US Range:** Parrot feather is native to South America, and is considered invasive in the United States. Nearby populations occur in New York and Rhode Island. Parrot feather is not known to be present in Maine waters.



**Annual Cycle:** Parrot feather is an aquatic perennial that propagates through root division and plant fragments. Plants usually flower in the spring but fall flowering also occurs. Male and female flower parts occur on separate plants, and male plants are only known to occur in the plant's native range. As a result, parrot feather populations in the United States do not produce seeds. Plants die back to their rhizomes toward the end of the growing season. New shoots begin to grow rapidly from overwintering rhizomes as water temperatures rise in the spring.

**Look Alikes:** When emergent stems and leaves are not present, parrot feather may be confused with bladderworts, hornworts, mermaid weeds, water crowfoots, and other leafy milfoils.



Tiny white flowers occur in the axils of the emergent stems



Thick growth creates the danger of entanglement



Leaves more closely arranged toward the growing tips