

EWM Question & Answer #2

***EWM vs. Native Northern Milfoil:
What's the difference? They look alike,
I hate them both and it's getting worse!***

They Look Alike: Well, sort of.

We've all seen David's handy milfoil ID cards, but it's hard to tell them apart so I found a couple of sites and pulled samples:

The weed at the top of the picture is *Northern Milfoil*. It's native. The leaves are stiffer (they extend even when out of the water). There are 5-10 leaflets on each leaf. The stalk is thin and yellow/brown in color.

The weed at the bottom of the picture is *Eurasian Milfoil (EWM)*. It's exotic and invasive. The leaves are denser and they collapse when the plant is out of the water. There are more leaflets (12-22) on each leaf. The stalk is thicker and reddish in color. The tips can extend above the water.



EWM: Heads above the surface, sometimes forming a matt. A forest of vegetation below.



Northern Milfoil: Matting in late summer.

I hate them both! Yeah, me too. But there are distinctions. As you recall, our EWM infestation sites were at the surface before Memorial Day. EWM starts growing as soon as it gets light (sometimes before the ice is off). With this "head start" and vigorous growth it spreads and without treatment the individual plants become more and more established every year.

Although Northern Milfoil will foul your prop, it took all summer before it created the matt that's shown above and it doesn't expand over time (it's been here much longer than we have).

.....and it's getting worse! About the only good thing of getting older, is being able to put things into perspective. When my folks bought their place 48 years ago, Bay Lake was rated by the DNR as being "a highly vegetated lake". The Northern Milfoil pictured above was exactly like it is today and pontoon rides required just as much "reversing"and, like it or not, the best defense against new EWM infestation sites is the presence of healthy native vegetation.

But it will get worse if EWM isn't kept in check. Plants that get established just keep getting bigger and infestation areas expand (remember our awesome littoral area?).

So, maybe we should look at the questions in a different way:

Are all weeds the same? No

Are some of our bothersome native weeds good? Yes

Does EWM overcome native weeds and if so is that a problem? Yes, and Yes

Would it be worse if we reduced or stopped our treatment program? Yes, dramatically so.

To learn more about EWM, our treatment strategy and how we could lose the fight, visit BayLake.com weekly. The series will last through September. Please send in your questions.