

Elodea canadensis

[Synonyms : *Anacharis canadensis*, *Anacharis canadensis* var. *planchonii*, *Elodea brandegea*, *Elodea brandegeae*, *Elodea ioensis*, *Elodea linearis*, *Elodea planchonii*, *Philotria canadensis*, *Philotria linearis*, *Udora canadensis*]

CANADIAN WATERWEED is a submerged freshwater aquatic perennial. Native to North America it has fairly brittle green stems with many overlapping, small curled translucent dark green leaves.

It is also known as *Alaw Canada* (Welsh), American waterweed, Anacharis, Babington's curse, Broad waterweed, Canada waterweed, Canadian pondweed, Common elodea, Common waterweed, Ditchmoss, Elodea, *Kanadische Wasserpest* (German), *Vanlig vattenpest* (Swedish), *Vattenpest* (Swedish), *Vodní mor kanadský* (Czech), *Vodomor kanadský* (Slovak), *Waterpest* (Dutch), Water thyme, and Waterweed.

Fragments of broken stem floating in water will grow independently. Male flower buds break off and float up to the surface and bloom while the female flowers' ovaries extend as far as the water surface to be pollinated. The cylindrical, yellow capsular fruit ripen under water. When not growing in profusion Canadian waterweed not only produces a very large amount of oxygen which purifies the surrounding water but also offers shelter for large numbers of animals eg. snails, upon which fish can feast. When the plant is multiplying rapidly its stems can be as much as 20 ft. long and its dry matter in volume per square meter can exceed that of any other similar aquatic.

Canadensis means 'of or from Canada or north-eastern North America'.

The North American Iroquois Indians used a plant infusion medicinally to cause vomiting.

While the behaviour of this freshwater aquatic gives rise to considerable concern if it becomes invasive (as it is capable of causing as much damage as water hyacinth, *Eichhornia crassipes*) in many places where it has been introduced in other areas it seems either to have died back for no apparent reason or to have maintained reasonable growth patterns. Apparently it was introduced to Ireland in the 1830s and England the following decade. In both Countries it spread rapidly until the 1880s when it began to decline and today is now scarce. At its extreme the plant became a hindrance both to navigation and to fishing in some places as it has also done on the European mainland where it has become naturalised widely. In contrast Canadian waterweed was introduced to New Zealand in the 1870s and is still invasive and of considerable concern today – as it also is in many parts of Australia. It is even viewed as invasive in parts of the United States.

Canadian waterweed has been grown in ponds (from which it has escaped) and when it is benign is a fisherman's delight (because it offers fish a haven and a larder).

Medicinally, local herbalists have used a plant infusion to cause vomiting.