

## Invasive Water Soldier discovered at local garden centre.

June 8, 2010

for immediate release

As Canada and the United States are in the process of amending the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, which directed the two federal governments to cooperate with state and provincial governments to develop and implement Remedial Action Plans for Areas of Concern, one of the issues at the fore-front of the discussions is invasive species.

On a local level, we can all be diligent in making sure no new invasive species make their way into the Bay of Quinte. Water Soldier (*Stratiotes aloides*) is an invasive aquatic plant that is still sold by the nursery trade, and has been discovered for sale at a local garden centre.

Last summer, populations of this winter hardy perennial plant were found in two isolated locations in the Trent-Severn Waterway. This spring, it has been discovered in several locations, proving once again how easy it is for an invasive species to become established. Water soldier is a common ornamental water garden and aquarium species, and it is possible that it was introduced via an accidental escape or release from a water garden or aquarium. Water soldier is native to Europe and northwest Asia.

Water soldier looks similar to an aloe plant, a spider plant or the top of a pineapple, with sharp serrated leaves that form a floating rosette. It has an interesting growth pattern in that it grows underwater on the river bottom, most of the year, but in late spring and summer it "pops up" to the surface. The new leaves that grow in the spring have air pockets which enable the plant to float. As the older leaves die back in fall they become waterlogged, and weigh the plant back underwater.

Water soldier forms dense mats of floating vegetation that can shade out native aquatic plants growing below the water and out-compete other floating plants. They also have a negative effect on small organisms that are part of the food web. The dense mats of vegetation can hinder recreational activities, such as boating, fishing and swimming. The serrated edges of the leaves are very sharp and may cut swimmers or people who handle the plant.

### **Water Gardeners – You can help!**

Never release aquatic plants, invertebrates or fish into natural waterways, drainage ditches, or sewers. It is illegal in all jurisdictions! Please take the following precautions to help prevent the spread of water soldier and other invading species:

- Become familiar with invading species of regional and national concern and the laws that may restrict their use.
- Select water garden sites that are located away from natural waterways and isolated

from any potential flooding situations.

- Dispose of unwanted plants by drying them completely and discarding them in household garbage. Avoid compost disposal, because many seeds can withstand drying and freezing.
- Remove potential hitchhiker invaders from your plant purchases by rinsing the roots until free of soil.
- Never collect plants from the wild for ornamental gardens.
- Consider using only native aquatic plants and discuss this with your local garden centre or aquarium shop. (Information courtesy of the Invading Species Awareness Program)

You can obtain information and report sightings of invasive species by using: The Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters (O.F.A.H) and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (O.M.N.R) toll-free number, the **Invading Species Hotline 1-800-563-7711** and website **[www.invadingspecies.com](http://www.invadingspecies.com)**

Remember – Healthy Bay • Healthy Community

For more information on the Bay of Quinte Remedial Action Plan [www.bqrap.ca](http://www.bqrap.ca)

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