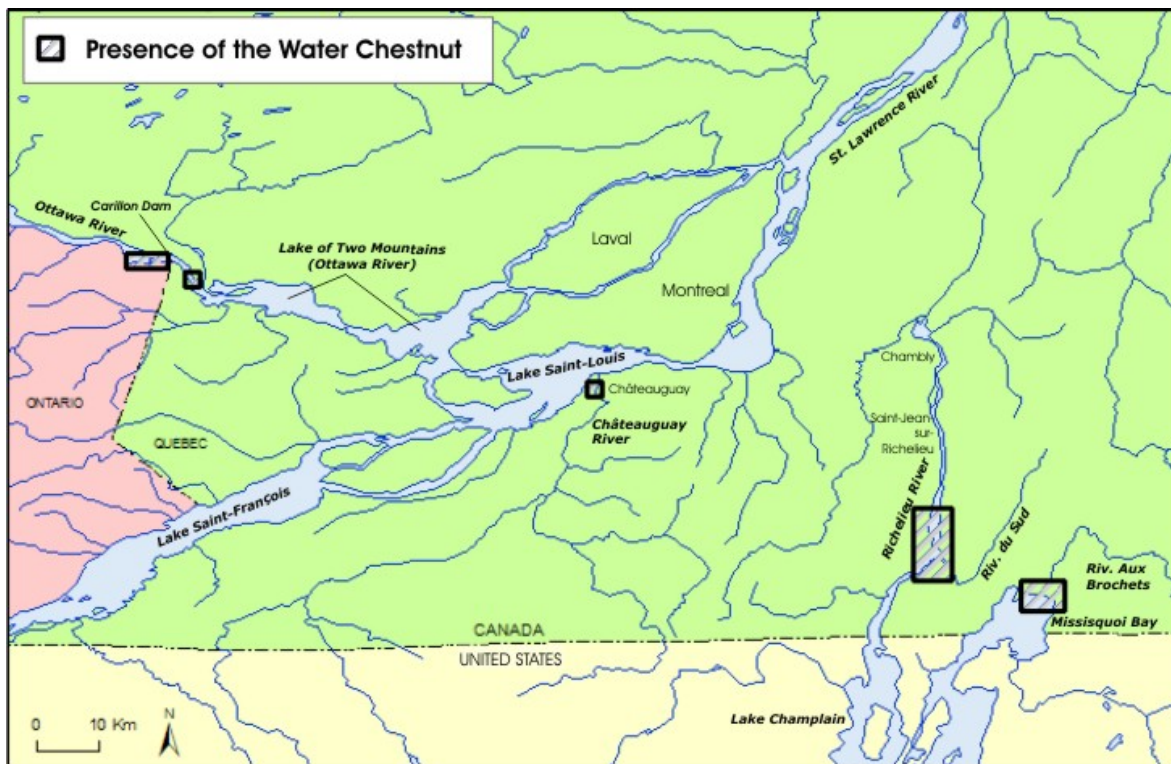


Water Chestnut spotted for the first time at the mouth of the Ottawa River

Until now, the St. Lawrence River has been spared by this unwanted aquatic plant. However, according to Martin Jean, St. Lawrence wetlands project leader at Environment Canada, this could change.

Originating from Eurasia and introduced into the United States at the end of the 19th century, the Water Chestnut (*Trapa natans*) was first spotted in Quebec in 1997 in the Rivière du Sud, where it spread at an alarming rate. It reached the Richelieu River in 2002, and some plants were observed in ditches along the shores of Lake Saint-Louis in the Châteauguay region in 2004. Quebec's Ministère des Ressources naturelles et de la Faune proceeded to remove 428 plants at that site. In 2008, Martin Jean noted the first mention of the plant's occurrence in Lake of Two Mountains between the Ottawa River and the St. Lawrence.

Known distribution of the Water Chestnut in the St. Lawrence watershed in 2008



© Environment Canada

Did you know...? The Water Chestnut is an invasive aquatic plant that disrupts the aquatic ecosystem. Its thick canopy of floating vegetation limits environmental biodiversity and interferes with recreational activities such as swimming, boating and fishing.



Martin Jean at Lake of Two Mountains
© Claude Lessard, Environment Canada



Water Chestnut plant spotted at Lake of Two Mountains in 2008
© Claude Lessard, Environment Canada

According to Martin Jean, the Water Chestnut most likely originated upstream of Lake of Two Mountains, since a major colony was observed in 2007 along the Ottawa River at Ontario's Voyageur Provincial Park. As a result, the St. Lawrence River has become vulnerable to the spread of this harmful species. To prevent this, the areas likely to become colonized should be closely monitored. Since 2004, shoreline communities have partnered with Environment Canada to monitor invasive plants in the St. Lawrence.

Learn how to recognize the Water Chestnut

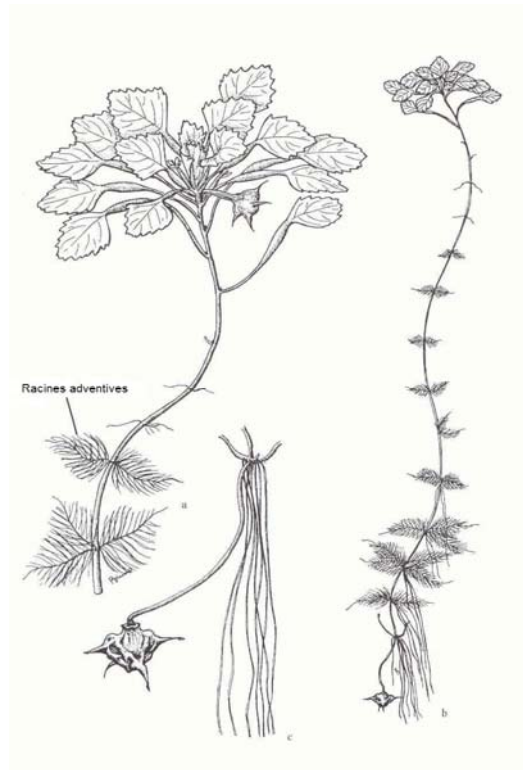
This floating aquatic plant prefers calm waters. It has floating diamond-shaped or triangular leaves with scalloped edges, and feather-like submersed leaves. It produces small white flowers with four petals in early summer, as well as fruit in the form of small black nuts with spines.



© Ministère des Ressources naturelles et de la Faune du Québec



© Ministère des Ressources naturelles et de la Faune du Québec



Source: Crow and Hellquist, 2000.
 a. Upper part of the plant, with floating leaves
 b. Entire plant
 c. Bottom portion, with nut attached

HAVE YOU SEEN THIS PLANT?

If you spot the Water Chestnut in the fluvial section of the St. Lawrence or outside its known distribution area, take a digital photograph if possible and send it, along with location information, to one of the following people:

Martin Jean (martin.jean@ec.qc.ca) or

Bertrand Dumas (bertrand.dumas@mrnf.gouv.qc.ca)

Isabelle Simard (isabelle.simard@mddep.gouv.qc.ca)

Renée Gagnon (services@cimehautrichelieu.qc.ca)

References

Crow, G.E. and C.B. Hellquist. 2000. *Aquatic and Wetland Plants of Northeastern North America: A Revised and Enlarged Edition of Norman C. Fassett's A Manual of Aquatic Plants. Volume One – Pteridophytes, Gymnosperms and Angiosperms: Dicotyledons*. Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press. 480 pages.

St. Lawrence Plan – Invasive Plant Species of the St. Lawrence Wetlands
http://www.planstlaurent.qc.ca/sl_obs/sesl/publications/fiches_indicateurs/plantes_e_nvahi_2008_e.pdf

Useful links

Centre d'interprétation du milieu écologique du Haut-Richelieu – La châtaigne d'eau
(Available in French only)
<http://www.cimehautrichelieu.qc.ca/chataigne-d-eau.htm>

Environment Canada – An Invasive Alien Species Strategy for Canada
<http://www.ec.gc.ca/eee-ias/default.asp?lang=En&n=98DB3ACF-1>

Government of Canada – Invasive Species
<http://www.invasivespecies.gc.ca/>

Ministère des Ressources naturelles et de la Faune - <http://www.mrn.gouv.qc.ca/>

Ministère du Développement durable, de l'Environnement et des Parcs du Québec –
La châtaigne d'eau
(Available in French only)
<http://www.mddep.gouv.qc.ca/jeunesse/chronique/2004/0404-chataigne.htm>