Intruders in our Lakes

Are you ready for summer? Sunshine, barbecues, good friends! But, what about uninvited guests that just don't know when to leave? They won't take a hint. In fact, they've really settled in.

Sometimes the best laid plans can go wrong. Like when everything is looking good but your motor bogs down in weeds.

We have some uninvited guests in our lakes. In this case, it's Eurasian Water Milfoil. We are under attack from this aggressive, tenacious non-native flora.

Our lakes draw swimmers, boaters and fishermen and women from all over the area. However, water-enthusiasts can drag along more than just sand in their boats, tackle boxes and swimming trunks. Fragments of EWM clinging to boats and trailers can spread the plant from lake to lake. A single segment of stem and leaves can take root and form a new colony. This invasive species chokes out native plants and degrades natural habitats. It grows in dense mats that impede boat motors, fishing lures and swimmers.

We need our native aquatic plants. Removing native vegetation makes room for EWM. Phosphorus fertilizer was banned from the area because EWM multiplies in lakes receiving nitrogen and phosphorous-laden runoff.

Governor Doyle has proclaimed June, 2005, as Invasive Species Awareness Month.

This is an important topic because, if left alone, EWM multiplies and spreads, forming a thick carpet across a lake. Non-native species threaten the recreational value of our lakes. It is believed that Eurasian Water Milfoil (EWM), which is native to the Europe, Asia, and northern Africa, was carried to the mid-west by ocean-going ships. Now, as boats put in at different lakes, they can carry this intruder unnoticed. It impairs boating and swimming while leaving no good habitat for fish to survive.

Twin Lakes does have EWM, but due to vigilance, it is not as serious as some lakes. With continued effort, we should be able to keep it under control and encourage the re-growth of native species.

The goal of Aquatic Plant management is to maintain a natural environment as much as possible. The DNR certifies chemical treatment with 2,4-D. This product is effective for EWM if applied judiciously, early in the season and at the proper dosage. This product has a short presence in the environment so that soon after application, it is safe to go back into the water and enjoy our lakes.

Note: Eurasian water milfoil has 9-21 pairs of leaflets per leaf, while native Northern milfoil typically has 7-11 pairs of leaflets. Notice the fine feathery leaflets compared to a water lily leaf:

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