

Invaders in the Trent Canal Susan Rightmyer

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Recently, I was around the Tweed area and came across an interesting article on the "Water Soldier" and true to its name it has been soldiering on through the Trent Waterway system. I thought you might find it interesting with a word of warning to our members. Do not let this plant get away from you. Make sure you tell your friends or the person you are sharing your plants with, that they do not throw this or any other plants or fish that they may want to get rid of, into streams and rivers.

From the following article you will read what a little bit of thoughtless disposal has created in a river system all due to this invasive plant which is destroying our ecosystem along the Trent Waterway System. Sarah Hyatt, Staff Reporter for the Tweed Community News, advises users of the Trent Waterways to be on the lookout for this free floating invasive aquatic plant known as "Water Soldier" (Latin Name : *Stratiotes aloides*) Originally from Europe and North West Asia, this invasive species is causing harm to the native vegetation in the area and restricting boating and swimming along the Trent Waterway System.

It is important for people to practice safe measures while boating. All boaters are encouraged to avoid areas infested with water soldier as it may lead to inadvertently spreading this invasive plant. Boats can actually break up the plant and help spread it. Infested are two large lakes Lake Seymour and Crowe Lake.



Water Soldiers typically, are used in aquariums. It grows in standing water or slow moving water up to a depth of 5 meters. It has razor sharp leaves and as such is a hazard to swimmers and boaters who use the canal for recreational use.

The leaves contain air pockets which force the plant to the water surface. As the leaves mature through the summer they become water logged and by the fall they sink back down to the river bed over the winter.

Having acclimatized to the cold Canadian winters it sinks to the bottom and comes up to the surface to bloom in the summer. The flowering season is from May to September when they are visible. This plant propagates by rhizomes and becomes prolific in warm temperatures. There are no natural predators to keep it under control so public awareness and vigilance is necessary.

Mary Bucholtz, Communications & Outreach Coordinator for Lower Trent Conservation says that in the last couple of years it has spread considerably. This plant was initially discovered in 2008 in the river at Trent River, a wee hamlet on the Trent River system. It is the only known wild species in all of North America. The Lower Trent River Conservation is part of a working group of volunteers formed to combat

the spread of this plant. "It's possible that someone dumped an aquarium into the river and now this species is thriving in this environment with no natural predators" says Bucholtz. She also states that "In the larger populated areas it is choking out natural vegetation and making it very difficult for recreational boating."

Matt Smith, Monitoring & Information specialist & Aquatic Invasive Species Outreach Liaison Officer for the Ontario Federation of Anglers & Hunters (OFAH) is also part of the working group to combat this species, as are members from the Ministry of Natural Resources & Forestry, Parks Canada (MNR/FPC) & Trent University. Other working groups are involved with the eradication of this plant and the public are asked to keep a watchful eye on this intruder and report its location if you come across it.

The groups involved plan to do extensive mapping, mechanical harvesting and a fall herbicide treatment. Herbicide treatments are expensive and can only be applied by licensed contractors making it prohibitive to a limited number of homeowners.

Environmental Technician Mary Gunning of Bay of Quinte Remedial Action Plan (BQRAP) stresses to the public the importance of how aggressive a spreader this plant actually is.

Please report new sightings : **Invading Species Hotline : 1-800-563-7711**

Waterfront Property Owners : **Please visit the website : www.ofah.org**