

# NOT WANTED



**WATER CHESTNUT**

***ALIAS: TRAPA NATANS***

**Distribution:** Water chestnut (*Trapa natans*) is an aquatic plant native to Asia. Water chestnut was first recorded in North America near Concord, Massachusetts in 1859. Wild populations have since become established in many locations in the Northeastern United States.

**Size:** Floating leaves are triangular in shape, one to two inches long and have sharp pointed teeth on the margins.

**Description:** Leaves are triangular in shape and strongly toothed. The rosette of floating leaves is connected to an inflated petiole, increasing buoyancy. Small four-petaled flowers give way to the nut-like fruit. The fruit have four ½ inch sharp, barbed spines.

## **Impacts to Aquatic Ecosystem:**

Water chestnut can form dense carpets of vegetation on the water surface, blocking sunlight from reaching submerged plants and reducing the oxygen exchange at the water's surface. It can also grow to form surface mats impenetrable to boats, swimmers and waterfowl. It creates breeding grounds for mosquitoes, and provides only marginal habitat for native fish and birds.

**Means of Introduction:** The first population of water chestnut in Maryland was documented in 1923 in a two-acre patch on the Potomac River outside of Washington D.C. Within a few years, the plant had spread over 40 river miles on the Potomac. The 10,000-acre coverage of water chestnut reaching past Quantico, Virginia, prompted removal efforts by the Army Corps of Engineers in 1939. Water chestnut was found in the Bird River, Baltimore County, in 1955 and subsequently in the Sassafras River, Kent County, in 1964.

**Status in Maryland:** Currently found in many of the small tributaries on the Bird and Sassafras Rivers Creek.

**Legal Standing:** The sale of all species of water chestnut are banned in Maryland.



For more information about water chestnut removal efforts in Maryland, please see the [Water Chestnut Eradication Report 1999-2010](#).