AQUATIC PLANTS OF THE UPPER MISSISSIPPI RIVER

What is an aquatic plant?

An aquatic plant is a plant that spends all or part of its life cycle in water.

Why are aquatic plants important?

- food and shelter for many animals including bugs, small fish, birds, and humans.
- produce oxygen for aquatic organisms.
- clean water by allowing sediment to settle out and absorbing nutrients.
- protect shorelines by dampening the effect of waves and current.

Muskrats make their winter homes out of emergent vegetation.

Arrowhead, also known as duck potato, produces an over-wintering structure in the roots called a tuber. The tuber is a favorite food of ducks during fall migration. Native Americans roasted the tuber like a potato and ate it.

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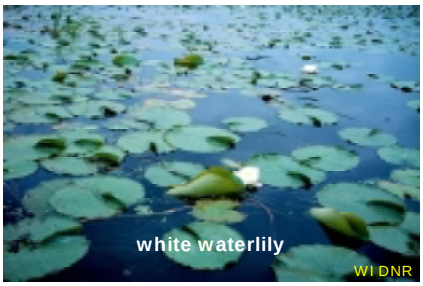
Lifeforms of aquatic plants.

- Emergent: The roots and part of the stem are underwater, the majority of the plant is above the water.

- Floating Leaf: The roots and stem are underwater, while the leaves float on surface of water.



- Submergent: All parts of the plant are underwater.

How do aquatic plants survive the winter?

- Most aquatic plants produce specialized wintering structures (called propagules) on the stem or root. These structures store energy that is used to produce a new plant in the spring.
- Some aquatic plants overwinter as a green plant. Green shoots may often be seen through an ice fishing hole.
- A few aquatic plants produce large numbers of seeds with a heavy coat.