

Spotted Pondweed

Potamogeton pulcher

Description

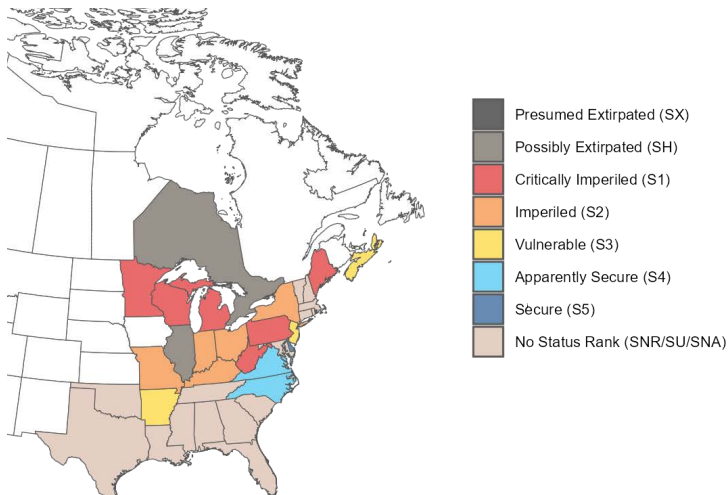
Spotted pondweed is an aquatic perennial herb that grows in standing water. The stems of this species are up to 20 inches (5 dm) long and have dark purple spots. The leaves are of two types, floating and submersed. The floating leaves are oval to elliptic, rounded or heart-shaped at the base, and have long, purple-spotted stalks. The submersed leaves are broadly lance-shaped, up to 1½ inches (3 cm) wide, and short-stalked or stalkless. The flowers are produced in dense spikes that are ¾ to 1½ inches (2-4 cm) long. Individual flowers are inconspicuous and have 4 small, greenish petals or sepals. Spikes are held above the water and can be seen June through August.



Photo source: Andrew Strassman (PNHP)

North American State/Province Conservation Status

Map by NatureServe 2025



Distribution & Habitat

Spotted pondweed occurs from Maine south to Florida and west to Minnesota and Texas. In Pennsylvania, it grows in shallow, acidic streams, vernal ponds, in swamps and on muddy shores.

Current State Status

The PA Biological Survey considers the spotted pondweed to be species of special concern, based on the relatively few occurrences that have been confirmed, the wetland habitat, and the regional rarity. It has been assigned a rarity status of Endangered.

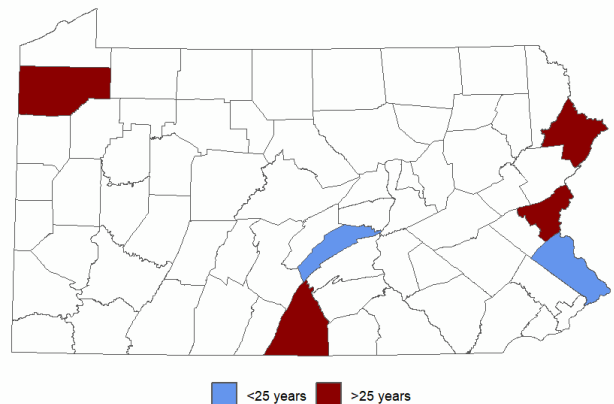
Conservation Considerations

Conservation of spotted pondweed will depend upon the protection of existing populations and maintenance of their wetland habitat. This may include removing invasive plants and creating buffers to help protect populations from the effects of run-off or flooding. Sustaining appropriate water levels will also be important for maintaining high quality habitats.

NatureServe conservation status ranks

G5 – Globally secure; S1 – Critically imperiled in Pennsylvania

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References

- NatureServe. 2014. NatureServe Explorer: An online encyclopedia of life [web application]. Version 6.1. NatureServe, Arlington, Virginia. Available at <http://www.natureserve.org/explorer>.
- Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program. 2025.
- Rhoads, A.F. and W.M. Klein, Jr. 1993. The Vascular Flora of Pennsylvania: Annotated Checklist and Atlas. American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia.
- Rhoads, A.F. and T.A. Block. 2000. The Plants of Pennsylvania: An Illustrated Manual. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia.

