

Common Aquatic Plants

Aquatic plants (also referred to as aquatic vegetation) are plants in the lake; either rooted in the soil or floating in the water.

Emergent plants are rooted and stand above the surface, often growing along the shoreline.



Cat tails



Bulrushes

Common submerged plants are rooted and most are under the water, although small portions may stick above the water.



Yellow pond lily and arrowhead



Flat stemmed pondweed

Photo: Donald Cameron

Invasive aquatic plants have also been introduced in Alberta. If you see an invasive plant, report it to EDDMaps or 1-855-336-BOAT – do not remove it on your own.



Flowering Rush



Himalayan Balsam

To learn more about aquatic plants, visit alms.ca and search “Aquatic plants”.

Respect Our Lakes

Aquatic Plant Removal

For more information:

Search ‘Respect our Lakes’ on Alberta.ca
Contact us at rol@gov.ab.ca
Call 310-3773

To report emergencies or complaints, call the Environmental Hotline at 1-800-222-6514

To apply for a *Water Act* authorization, search ‘Digital Regulatory Assurance System’ on Alberta.ca.

Search ‘Temporary Field Authorization’ on Alberta.ca to apply for authorization under the *Public Lands Act*.

Alberta

Alberta



Aquatic Plants in Alberta Lakes

Aquatic plants are important for maintaining healthy lake ecosystems. They provide fish spawning and bird nesting habitat, rearing sites for young fish and wildlife, and they protect shorelines from wave and wind erosion. Aquatic plants also perform many important functions that maintain water quality, such as filtering runoff water that enters the lake and protect shorelines from wave and wind erosion.

Lakes that have lost significant aquatic plants are especially vulnerable to excess plant growth, such as cyanobacterial (blue-green algal) blooms, due to excess nutrient availability. Incremental removal results in a significant cumulative loss of aquatic habitat to the lake ecosystem.

Lakeshore stakeholders can get permission to cut or remove aquatic plants to make it easier to put in docks and piers, or to improve swimming and boating conditions.

Aquatic plants play an important role in filtering runoff and reducing additional nutrients that enter the lake. They also protect the shore from wave action and erosion.



Under the Disturbance Standard for Temporary Seasonal Docks, cutting aquatic plants is permitted only if it is necessary to install a seasonal dock. Aquatic plant cutting can occur one time between July 15 and September 15 by manual or mechanical means, to a max width of four meters and max depth of one meter. It must occur in the same location every year and all cut plants must be removed immediately from the bed and shore.

All Other Aquatic Plant Cutting and Removal Requires Approval.

Removing or cutting aquatic plants requires prior authorization by from the Government of Alberta. Unauthorized removal or cutting could get you in trouble. Here's what the law says:

- Under the *Water Act*, approval is required for an activity which affects a water body such as aquatic plant removal
- Under the *Public Lands Act*, it is prohibited to disturb the bed and shore of a water body without prior authorization

Restrictions around timing, method of removal and width of area removed apply to ensure impact to the aquatic environment including fisheries and wildlife habitat are minimized. Requirements will be specified in the authorization if it is granted.

Aquatic plants also provide important fish habitats - remove as little as possible after you've received proper authorizations to help keep your lake ecosystem healthy.



How to apply for an authorization

You can apply for a general *Water Act* approval through the Digital Regulatory Assurance System (DRAS).

A Temporary Field Authorization under the *Public Lands Act* can be applied for through regional offices. Search for 'Temporary Field Authorization' on alberta.ca for required forms and contact information. An authorization under the *Public Lands Act* may be exempt if there is no disturbance or modification to the lake bed or its banks. Applications need to clearly describe the activity taking place and its location with respect to the individual lot, materials and tools that will be used, and actions to mitigate impacts to the bed and shore and the aquatic environment.

Stewardship actions

- Aquatic plants are not "weeds" — let them grow and leave your shoreline in its natural condition! Submerged aquatic plants compete with algae for nutrients and light, trap sediment and provide important wildlife habitat.
- Consider sharing docks, piers and boat lanes within your community to minimize shoreline disturbance.
- Keep your beach natural, don't plow it or add sand.