



Water Lettuce

Pistia stratiotes

Plant Height: 4 inches

Flower Height: 6 inches

Spread: 14 inches

Sunlight:

Hardiness Zone: (annual)

Other Names: Water Cabbage

Description:

This water plant has interesting square to fan shaped foliage that is velvety and beautifully ribbed; flowers are somewhat inconspicuous; excellent for edging a water feature or pond; watch for aphids; invasive in frost free areas

Ornamental Features

Water Lettuce's attractive tomentose square leaves remain bluish-green in colour throughout the year. It features subtle chartreuse tubular flowers with creamy white overtones rising above the foliage from early to late summer. The fruit is not ornamentally significant.

Landscape Attributes

Water Lettuce is an herbaceous annual with a ground-hugging habit of growth. Its medium texture blends into the garden, but can always be balanced by a couple of finer or coarser plants for an effective composition.

This plant will require occasional maintenance and upkeep, and is best cleaned up in early spring before it resumes active growth for the season. Gardeners should be aware of the following characteristic(s) that may warrant special consideration;

- Spreading
- Invasive
- Insects

Water Lettuce is recommended for the following landscape applications;

- Water Gardens
- Container Planting

Planting & Growing

Water Lettuce will grow to be only 4 inches tall at maturity extending to 6 inches tall with the flowers, with a spread of 14 inches. Its foliage tends to remain low and dense right to the ground. Although it's not a true annual, this fast-growing plant can be expected to behave as an annual in our climate if left outdoors over the winter usually needing replacement the following year. As such, gardeners should take into consideration that it will perform differently than it would in its native habitat.



Water Lettuce foliage
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder



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Plant Finder

This plant does best in full sun to partial shade. It is an excellent choice for very wet locations or locations with some standing water. It is not particular as to soil type or pH. It is somewhat tolerant of urban pollution. This species is not originally from North America.

Water Lettuce is a fine choice for the garden, but it is also a good selection for planting in outdoor pots and containers. Because of its spreading habit of growth, it is ideally suited for use as a 'spiller' in the 'spiller-thriller-filler' container combination; plant it near the edges where it can spill gracefully over the pot. Note that when growing plants in outdoor containers and baskets, they may require more frequent waterings than they would in the yard or garden.