



# Protect Our Waters

## Help Prevent the Spread of Invasive Aquatic Plants

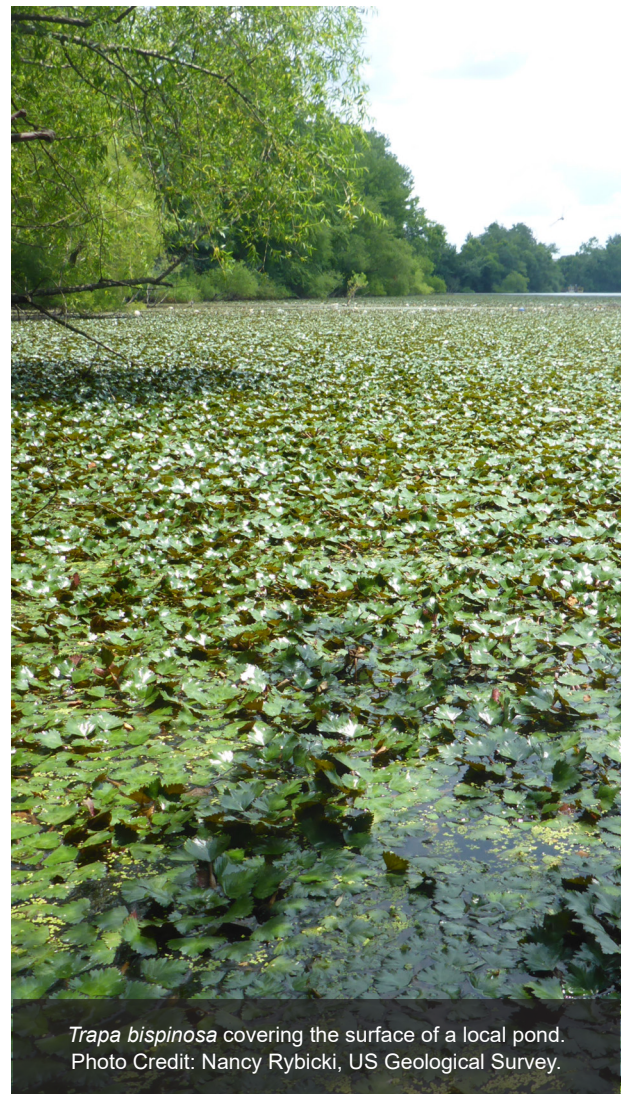
### How Invasive Trapa Affects You, How to Identify It, and How You Can Help Get Rid of It

*Trapa bispinosa* and *T. natans* are invasive species that threaten aquatic ecosystems in Fairfax County. Commonly referred to as water chestnuts or caltrops, trapa continues to spread throughout the region, particularly in open water bodies like stormwater management ponds. These species also may encroach into your privately-owned ponds. By acting now, we have the opportunity to eradicate it, before it reaches the Potomac River and spreads regionally.

### How Trapa Affects You?

Water chestnuts are non-native invasive aquatic plants that can out-compete other, native aquatic plants. Its dense growth can lead to ecological and water quality degradation. Once it is there, it can quickly take over a pond, creating a thick mat on the surface of the water, blocking sunlight that would nourish the deeper pond ecosystem, and depleting oxygen that sustains the wider aquatic plant and animal community.

It also can make your pond really stinky!



*Trapa bispinosa* covering the surface of a local pond.  
Photo Credit: Nancy Rybicki, US Geological Survey.



**ALSO KNOWN AS WATER  
CALTROPS, THESE FRUIT CAN  
MAKE FOR UNPLEASANT LONG  
WALKS ALONG THE SHORE.**

## What Does It Look Like?

Both trapa species look fairly similar in that they have a distinctive floating rosette of triangular leaves with toothed edges. They start producing small white-pink flowers in early summer, and set sharp-horned fruits (2-4 horns) about a month after flowering. Trapa also have feathery submerged leaves that grow around branching stems. These plants can reach depths of up to 16 feet!

## How Can You Help 'Trap' Trapa?

No matter the species of trapa, if you have it, you have a problem. If you think you have detected trapa, let us know via the links and contacts below. Early detection can make all the difference in successful treatments.

Responding to small populations can be quite easily managed by harvesting the plants before fruits set. Larger infestations may require more drastic measures. Please see links below for more information and options for helping to stop the spread of trapa.



*Trapa bispinosa* mature fruit in September.  
Photo Credit: Lynde Dodd, US Army Engineer  
Research and Development Center



*Trapa bispinosa* seed, rosette of leaves and pink flower.  
Photo Credit: Nancy Rybicki, US Geological Survey  
Source: WJLA



### Please Report Trapa if You Find it in Your Pond

The United States Geological Survey (USGS) tracks populations of nonindigenous plants and animals. To report a trapa sighting, go to: [Nonindigenous Aquatic Species \(usgs.gov\)](https://www.usgs.gov/nonindigenous-aquatic-species). The USGS also monitors for sightings of trapa within the popularly used app iNaturalist, which can also help in identification. Upon reporting, the USGS will confirm the sighting, and follow up with the pond owner. Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District (NVSWCD) has also offered to help confirm sightings: [Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District \(fairfaxcounty.gov\)](https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/nvswcd)



### For More Information on Trapa and Options for Control

Please click on or copy the following address into your web browser:  
[www.fairfaxcounty.gov/publicworks/trapa](https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/publicworks/trapa)

