

Pickerelweed

Pickerelweed, *Pontederia cordata*, is a native aquatic plant found in shallow ponds, streams, marshes, and wet ditches.

Pickerelweed has a clump forming habit and spreads by short rhizomes. The clumps grow larger each year and colonize, but it is not considered an aggressive grower.

It attains a height of approximately three feet above the water, or mud. Its arrowhead shaped leaves grow on long, fleshy stalks, and are three to seven inches in length. The foliage becomes dormant in the winter. Young unfurled leaves are edible and can be added to salads or boiled for ten minutes and served with butter.

Its blooms, which grow on conspicuous spikes, appear in late spring and continue blooming until early fall. The flower spikes grow on fleshy stems and are six inches in length, purple-blue, and occasionally white. The blooms provide nectar for a number of insects including bees, wasps, and butterflies.



The red, sticky fruit is considered an important wildlife food and is eaten by ducks and other animals. Each fruit contains a single starchy seed which, in addition to the leaves, is edible. The seeds are very nutritious and can be eaten out of hand, dried, or added to cereals. They can also be roasted and ground into flour.

Pickerelweed is easy to propagate through root division and can be collected and divided throughout the year. Many native plant nurseries in our area carry this beautiful aquatic plant.

By Sharon LaPlante

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