

Slender Pondweed *Potamogeton pusillus*

Native to the Chesapeake Bay, invasive in ponds and reservoirs

Family - Potamogetonaceae

Distribution - Slender pondweed grows in fresh to slightly brackish water. It grows in soft, fertile mud substrates and quiet to gently flowing water. Slender pondweed occurs primarily in the Potomac, Patuxent and Gunpowder rivers.

Recognition - The leaves of slender pondweed are narrow, linear and grass-like, and are arranged alternately on slender, branching stems. Leaf blades of slender pondweed are entire and have pointed tips and can have a purplish tint. The leaf bases are free of stipules and usually contain two small translucent glands. Slender pondweed has a root-rhizome system.

Ecological Significance - Like all other pondweeds, slender pondweed is considered an important food for waterfowl.

Similar Species - Slender pondweed is similar in appearance to sago pondweed (*Stuckenia pectinata*), widgeon grass (*Ruppia maritima*) and horned pondweed (*Zanichellia palustris*). However, slender pondweed only overlaps in distribution with horned pondweed. Slender pondweed has slightly broader leaves and a slight purplish tint that distinguish it from horned pondweed.

Reproduction - Slender pondweed reproduces asexually and sexually. Asexual reproduction is by buds, which are dense aggregations of leaves that eventually drop off and over-winter to form new plants in spring. Smooth-leaved winter buds form axillary along branches and at terminal ends of stems. Sexual reproduction is by late summer flowering. These flowers occur in whorls of 3 to 5 on terminal or axillary spikes. Fertilization takes place underwater, producing smooth seeds with rounded backs. Sexual reproduction is by late summer flowering. These flowers occur in whorls of 3 to 5 on terminal or axillary spikes. Fertilization takes place underwater, producing smooth seeds with rounded backs.

