

White watercress (*Rorippa nasturtium-aquaticum*)

Also called: *Nasturtium officinale*

Family name: Mustard (Brassicaceae)

Native range: Europe

NJ Status: Emerging Stage 3 – Common (may be regionally abundant). It is *highly threatening* to natural plant communities. Eradication of newly emerging occurrences only.

General description:

- Aquatic or semiaquatic perennial, 4"-18" tall
- Grows submerged or lies atop wet soil
- Often evergreen
- Roots from the nodes
- Stems hollow, hairless



Leaves:

- Alternate, nearly toothless, pinnately lobed
- 3-9 oval to lance-shaped leaflets
- Terminal leaflet largest
- Pungent, nasturtium-like odor when bruised



Flowers:

- Flat-topped cluster of small white flowers
- 0.2" wide with 4 petals and 4 sepals
- Borne on long stems (0.3"-0.75" long)
- Blooms mid-April through summer



Fruit:

- Small, coarse, round seeds with 25-50 indentations (need a microscope to observe)
- Held in two rows in curving, slender pods (0.4"-0.6" long and 0.08" wide)



Habitat:

- Lakes, ponds, rivers, marsh, streams, seeps, springs, vernal pools, moist ground
- Prefers rich, moist soil, and cold, quietly flowing water

Commercial availability: Yes

Often cultivated and sold for its edible leaves.

Look-alikes:

There are numerous species in the Mustard family with similar characteristics. The following grow in moist soils only.

Onerow yellowcress (*Rorippa microphylla*)

- Non-native, unlikely to be invasive
- Very similar to white watercress
- Seeds appear in one row in the pod
- White flowers



Onerow yellowcress
Seeds appear in one row within pod

Marsh yellowcress (*Rorippa palustris*)

- Native biennial or short-lived perennial, very common, found across the U.S.
- Leaves variable: irregularly serrate to deeply cut or pinnately divided
- Yellow flowers

Marsh yellow cress
has variable leaves

