

WATER CROWFOOTS

WATER BUTTERCUPS

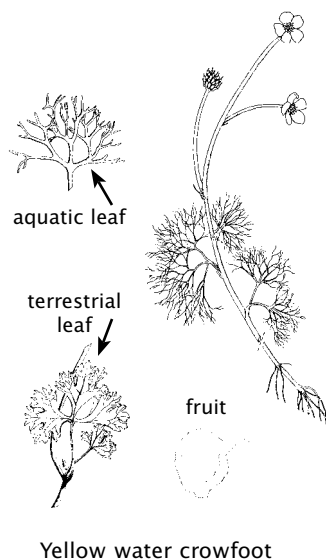
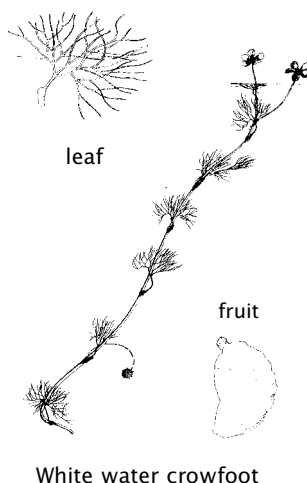
Ranunculus aquatilis var. *diffusus* and *R. flabellaris*

NATIVE TO MAINE

NOTE: Worldwide, most botanists classify the two species described here as being in the genus *Batrachium*. The genus classification of *Ranunculus* for these two species is confined primarily to the United States, and is the exception

Habitat: Sixteen different *Ranunculus* species occur in Maine. Several of these are aquatic species, and two: white water crowfoot (*Ranunculus aquatilis* var. *diffusus*) and yellow water crowfoot (*Ranunculus flabellaris*), are possible invasive aquatic plant look alike. Both water crowfoot species grow in the submerged plant community, generally in quiet to slow moving water up to two meters in depth. Yellow water crowfoot is well adapted to life at the water's edge and is often found in its terrestrial form, stranded along muddy shores. In Maine, white water crowfoot is more common than yellow water crowfoot.

Description: The leaves of both water crowfoot species are borne on long, branching stems emerging from trailing runners or buried rhizomes. Both species have small (1 to 2 cm long) branch-divided leaves, arranged alternately along the stem. The leaves of white water crowfoot are finer, more delicate, and thread-like (round in cross-section). Like the leaves of many aquatic plants, they go limp when removed from the water. The leaves have slender petioles that widen at the stem to form a clasping sheath that wraps all the way around the stem. The leaves of yellow water crowfoot are courser, flattened, and hold their shape when removed from the water. Distinct leaf stems may be absent. Both species produce small buttercup-like flowers, with five petals. The flowers of white water crowfoot are white; the flowers of yellow water crowfoot are yellow. Tiny beaked fruits or nutlets form in clusters on slender stalks.

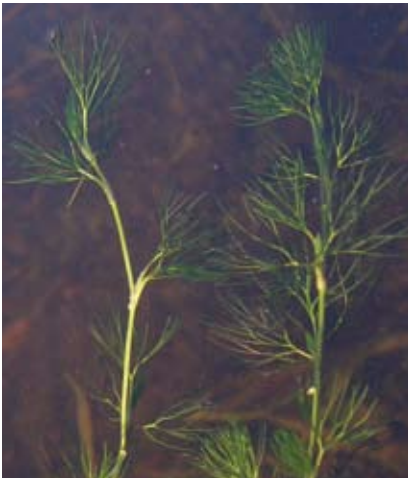


US Range: Both water crowfoots are native to Maine, New England and much of the United States. In Maine, white water crowfoot is more common than yellow water crowfoot.

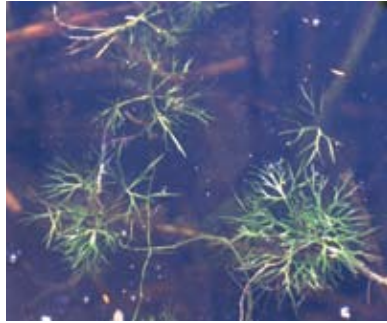
Annual Cycle: Water crowfoots are aquatic perennials, dying back to their rhizomes as winter sets in, and overwintering in the sediments. New growth emerges as the water warms in the spring. Flowers are produced in the early summer, followed by fruits in mid-summer. Plants propagate from seed, and also reproduce vegetatively from stem fragments, rhizomes and runners.

Value in the Aquatic Community: The fruit and foliage of water crowfoot is a source of food for some waterfowl; the plants also offer food and shelter for fish.

Look Alikes: May be confused with other plants with finely divided leaves including bladderworts, fanwort, hornwort species, mermaid weeds, water marigold, and leafy water-milfoils.



White water crowfoot has finely branch-divided, thread-like leaves



Yellow water crowfoot has branch-divided leaves, flattened in cross-section



White water crowfoot in flower



Yellow water crowfoot in flower