

Le Sueur County Environmental Services



NEWSLETTER

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Summary of Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Efforts in 2025

Program Summary

Le Sueur County's Aquatic Invasive Species program for 2025 dealt with a new challenge this year; we were informed that there would be a reduction in future state funds for County AIS Prevention Aid. A reassessment of the program will need to be completed to determine how to realign priorities with less state funds. The County is fortunate to have strong partnerships with local government units, organizations, and businesses to assist with AIS prevention efforts. Funds spent in 2025 were used for watercraft inspections, education, outreach, printing, publishing, advertising, administration, trainings/mileage, and AIS control efforts.

Summary of 2025 Aquatic Invasive Species Aid Accomplishments

Le Sueur County partnered with **13** organizations in 2025 to support AIS related work such as watercraft inspections and education/outreach efforts. A total of **\$1,810** of additional funds were leveraged to help support the work that was completed as a partnership.

A majority of Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Aid funds within Le Sueur County were spent on watercraft inspections; **68.9%**. There was a total of **2,995.5** hours of inspections. **19** accesses and **16** waterbodies were covered by inspectors throughout the inspection season.

A new infestation of Eurasian Watermilfoil was detected early and treated on Lake Volney this fall. An assessment scheduled for next spring will determine the effectiveness of this treatment.

2025 AQUATIC INVASIVE SPECIES PREVENTION AID METRICS

To review the entire report, please visit the following website:

<https://www.co.le-sueur.mn.us/301/Aquatic-Invasive-Species>

Or email the Le Sueur County Aquatic Invasive Species Coordinator at

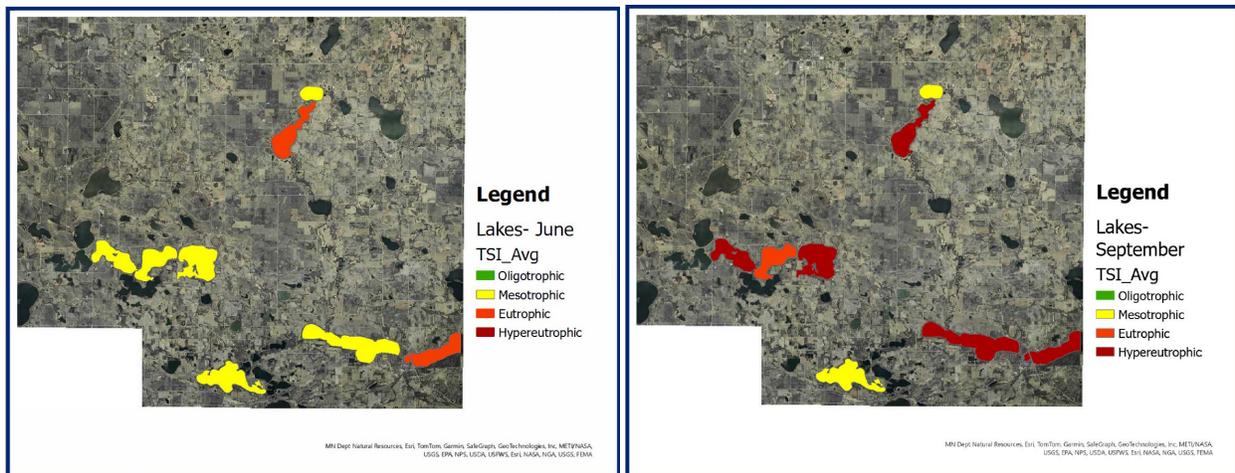
trevor.rudenick@lesueurcounty.gov

2025 Le Sueur County Lakes Water Sampling Efforts

Le Sueur County has continued building coordination efforts for volunteer lake monitoring. 2024 had 5 lakes that were able to sample from July to September. As of 2025, 8 lakes are now a part of the program and were able to sample for the full season from May to September.

The process of sampling went relatively smooth again this season. Individuals from last year were familiar with the sampling methods and were able to start back up with relative ease, and the newcomers for the program had no major issues with the process. The Total Phosphorus and Chlorophyll-A samples were taken and dropped off to the County on the third Monday of the month; samples were typically taken the Sunday night before. The County continued this year bringing the samples up to the laboratory once they were all brought in and replacing the samplers with new bottles for the next month.

This year, the lakes that sampled were East Jefferson, Middle Jefferson, Gorman, Upper Sakatah, Frances, German, Tetonka, and Volney. In the two maps shown below, some months of sampling are shown with the scale showing the average Trophic Scale Index (TSI) of both the Chlorophyll-A and Total Phosphorous results. The TSI of a lake indicates how much bio productivity there is. The levels in the lakes fluctuate throughout the season based on natural processes. The results from this year were more baseline compared to last year due to the flooding event that occurred during the summer months.



Figures 1 and 2. TSI Average for June and September. Map Credit: *Le Sueur County*

The average TSI for the lakes for the entire season were as follows: German-61.6, Gorman-66, East Jeff-62.4, Frances-48.8, Middle Jeff-69, Tetonka-69, Upper Sakatah-76.25, Volney-57.2.

Now that the program has been established, Le Sueur County is hoping to keep adding more lakes to these sampling efforts. Lake data is an important part of lake stewardship and can inform lakeshore owners how their lakes are trending in terms of lake health. If you or anyone you know is interested in becoming a part of this program, reach out to Trevor Rudenick, Water Resources Planner, for more information. See staff list at end of newsletter for contact information.

2025 Middle Minnesota River-Mankato and Lower Minnesota River Watersheds Monitoring Efforts

Le Sueur SWCD and Le Sueur County have partnered for monitoring efforts in the Middle Minnesota River-Mankato Watershed and the Lower Minnesota River Watershed. These monitoring efforts are due to the State of Minnesota entering into its second round of developing the Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategies Report. This report assesses conditions within a watershed and provides recommendations for protection and improvement efforts. As part of developing this report, water resources, both lakes and streams, are monitored and sampled for different water quality parameters.

We are in our second year of monitoring efforts for the Middle Minnesota River-Mankato Watershed. Lake Emily and Shanaska Creek were sampled in 2025. For the Lower Minnesota River Watershed, this is the first year of monitoring. Clear Lake is the only lake within Le Sueur County that will be sampled within this watershed. The Lake is contracted to be sampled both in 2025 and 2026. Forest Prairie Creek, Le Sueur Creek, and Unnamed Creek 761 Near Henderson will be sampled in 2025 and 2026 as well.

Streams were sampled to assess Total Phosphorus, Dissolved Oxygen, Total Suspended Solids (Sediment), Bacteria, water clarity, and pH. Lakes were sampled to assess Total Phosphorus, Chlorophyll A, and Water Clarity.

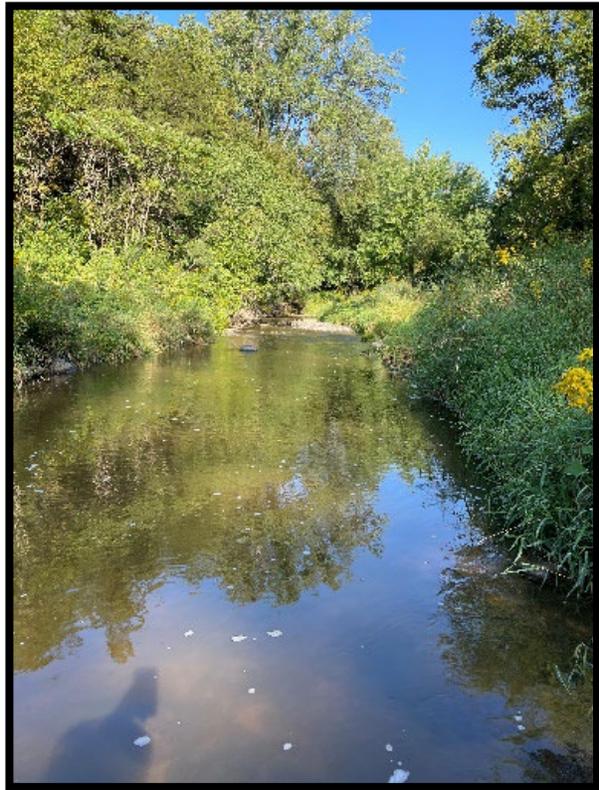
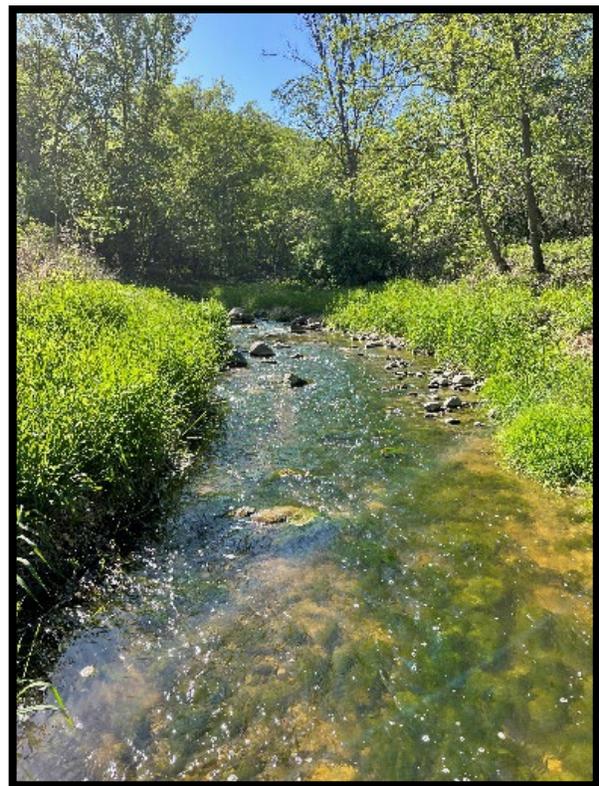


Figure 3. Forest Prairie Creek. Photo Credit: Trevor Rudenick. (Above). **Figure 4. Tributary to Judicial Ditch 2.** Photo Credit: Trevor Rudenick. (Below).



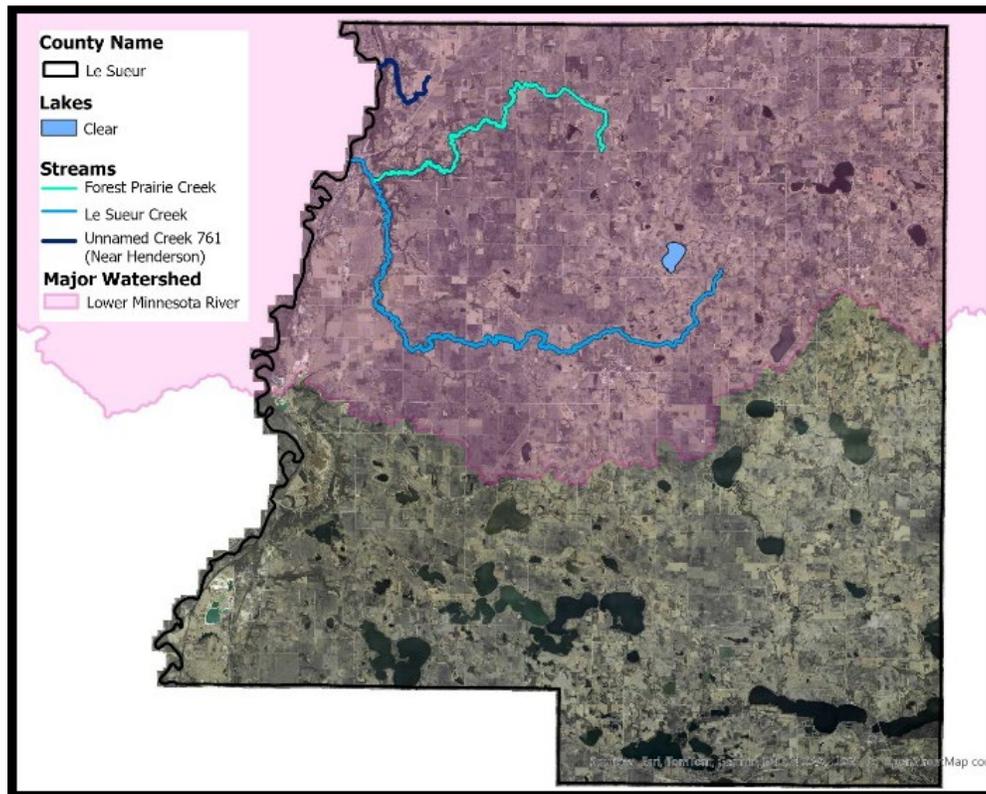


Figure 5. Lake and Stream Locations for Monitoring Efforts in the Lower Minnesota River Watershed. Map Credit: Le Sueur County.

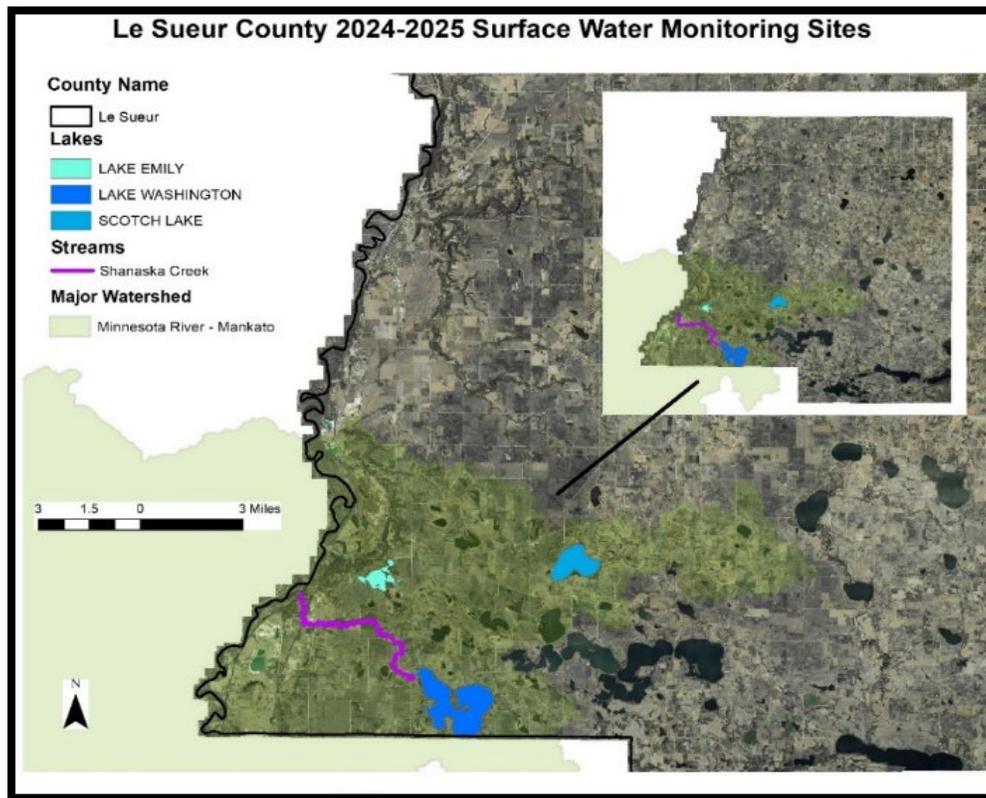


Figure 6. Lake and Stream Locations for Monitoring Efforts in the Middle Minnesota River - Mankato Watershed. Map Credit: Le Sueur County.

Cannon River Watershed Native Planting Cost-Share

As a friendly reminder, the Cannon River Watershed Joint Powers Organization is offering cost-share for Native Plantings for Shoreland Owners.

Project Requirements: The project must be located within the Cannon River Watershed and within 300 feet of a Lake.

Cost-Share Available: \$500 is available for each parcel for a planting project that is a minimum of 150 square feet.

If you would like to learn more, please visit the Cannon River Watershed Joint Powers Organization webpage: <https://www.cannonriverwatershedmn.gov/costshareincentives>.

If you would like to speak to a local staff member, please contact Trevor Rudenick at trevor.rudenick@lesueurcounty.gov



Figure 7. Cannon River Watershed Native Shoreland Planting Cost-Share Flyer. Photo Credit: CRWJPO.

Lower Minnesota River East Watershed Native Planting Cost-Share



**THE LOWER MINNESOTA RIVER
EAST WATERSHED PARTNERSHIP**

NATIVE PLANTINGS COST-SHARE

ELGIBILITY FOR COST SHARE

SITE LOCATION

- Projects must be located in Shoreland or Riparian Areas
- Projects must be located within 300 feet of one of the following Priority Water Resources:
 - Clear Lake
 - Le Sueur Creek
 - Forest Prairie Creek
 - Sand Creek
 - Unnamed Creek (near Henderson)

PROJECT DETAILS

- Only 1 project per parcel
- Must have a diversity of at least 5 native species planted or seeded
- All plant species must be native to Minnesota
- Minimum project size is 150 square feet
- Project cannot be within an already existing native planting

BENEFITS OF PLANTING NATIVE SPECIES

- Low maintenance
- Prevent erosion
- Improve soil health
- Resiliency to local pests and diseases
- Provide food for birds, bees, butterflies and other wildlife
- Provide habitat for native species of pollinators
- Cost effective in the long run
 - Once established, plants seldom need to be mulched, watered or mowed

**\$500
per parcel**



**Lower Minnesota
River East
Watershed**



www.lowermnrivereast.org



Lower Minnesota River East
Watershed Partnership

Reach out to local staff if you are interested about what you would be eligible for on your property.

Figure 8. Lower Minnesota River East Watershed Native Shoreland Planting Cost-Share Flyer. Photo Credit: LoMRE Partnership.

Le Sueur County Soil and Water Conservation District Tree and Native Plant Sales

If you are looking for trees, shrubs, plant kits, or native seed to purchase, the Le Sueur County Soil and Water Conservation District is having their tree/plant sale for 2026!

They have a variety of different species to choose from! Some species are sold in bundles or kits and others are sold individually.

If you have questions, please contact the Le Sueur County Soil and Water Conservation District. Their phone number is 507-419-0365 and their physical address is 181 W Minnesota Street, Le Center, MN 56057. To review the online store, please visit the following link: <https://www.lesueurswcd.gov/category/all-products>.

Figure 9. Native Plants Examples. *Photo Credit: Le Sueur SWCD and Le Sueur County.*



Cannon River Watershed Well Sealing Cost-Share

RESIDENTIAL WELL SEALING PROGRAM



Do you have an old, abandoned well on your property? Looking into getting it sealed? Cost-share funds are available for eligible areas in the Cannon River Watershed.

Unused wells can threaten the quality of drinking water for many. They can act as a drain and allow runoff and waste to enter into drinking water sources.

Eligible properties can receive up to \$3,000 to help seal their well if their contract is approved. Contracts must be in place before any work is started.

Reach out to your local Soil & Water Conservation District or County to see if your property is eligible.



Scan the QR code
to find your
local contact

Photo credit: Le Sueur County

**FUNDS
AVAILABLE**

 Cannon River Watershed
Joint Powers Organization

 cannonriverwatershedmn.gov

 [crwjpo](https://www.youtube.com/crwjpo)



Figure 10. Cannon River Watershed Joint Powers Organization Cost-Share Flyer. Photo Credit: CRWJPO.

Le Sueur County Well Sealing Efforts

Le Sueur County has actively been working with landowners and offering cost-share assistance to seal wells since 2019. Since that time, Le Sueur County has sealed 35 private, commercial/industrial, and municipal wells. In total, the County has acquired \$296,985 of competitive and watershed based grant funds to seal wells to protect groundwater and drinking water resources. The total grant funds does not include municipal efforts in acquiring state funds or local dollars for these projects.



Figure 11. City of Le Center Municipal Well. Photo Credit: City of Le Center Public Works Department.

In 2023, the County was awarded, for the first time, grant funds to assist with sealing a municipal well. The County partnered with the City of Le Center to seal a municipal well that was constructed in 1923 and was a total depth of 302 feet. The well was located a few feet below a sidewalk near City Hall, and the City of Le Center was able to locate this well through a Surface

Water Protection Plan Implementation Grant from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. Additional financial assistance was needed in order to properly abandon and seal the well. A partnership formed between Le Sueur County and the City of Le Center to apply for a competitive Clean Water Grant for this project. Grant funds were awarded in 2023 and the project began that same year. The project had some road blocks along the way and the County and City of Le Center were awarded additional State funds to help cover the costs. The municipal well was sealed in July of 2024. Due to the efforts of both County and City staff the project was completed successfully. Additional funds from this Clean Water Fund grant were also utilized to seal residential wells that were located within the same major watershed and aquifers as the municipal well. The County was able to seal 5 residential wells.

The County is now actively working with the City of Le Sueur to seal industrial wells that were a result from the Green Giant Canning Facility. Both wells each offer their own challenges and the County and City are working on a plan to seal both industrial wells. One of the Green Giant wells was located on accident as a result of clean up efforts, and the other well was located utilizing the Surface Water Protection Plan Implementation Grant from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. Le Sueur County and the City of Le Sueur are aiming to seal one of the wells in 2026.

Minnesota Native Plant

Sweet Fern (*Comptonia peregrina*)

Sweet Fern is a perennial, that is a part of the Myricaceae (Bayberry) family. This species is actually not a fern but rather a low growing shrub.

This species grows anywhere from 2 to 4 feet in height. Sweet Fern is woody species that is branched. The leaves resemble fern like leaves and have a very sweet fragrance when crushed (hence the name). Additionally the leaves are arranged alternate on the stem.

The inflorescence (flower head) is comprised of catkins which is a long and slim cluster of flowers. There are both female and male catkins that are on this species in order to reproduce. The male catkins (Staminate) are olive green in color and wormlike. The female catkins (Pistillate) are dark red in color and round. Sweet Fern blooms from April to June. This species also contains a fruit that is olive brown in color and resembles a burr.

Sweet Fern spreads rapidly as their roots are considered rhizomes which makes them spread easily underground and can form colonies.



Figure 12. Sweet Fern Leaves. Photo Credit: Holly Bushman.

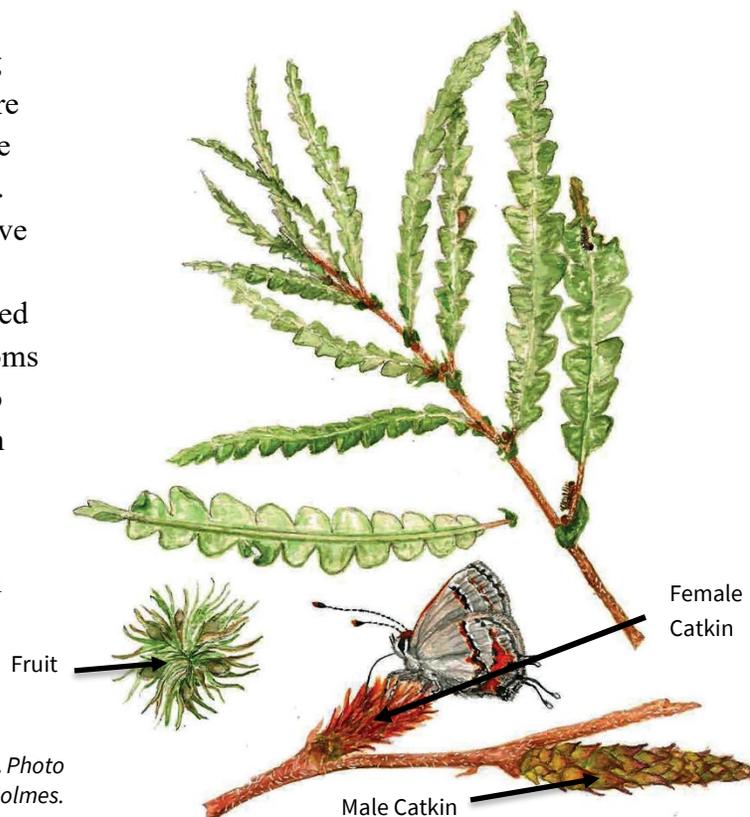


Figure 13. Sweet Fern Inflorescence and Fruit. Photo Credit: The Laurel of Asheville-Anne Holmes.

This species thrives in sandy soils and well drained sites. Sweet fern can tolerate mesic conditions but does not do well in clay soils. It prefers full sunlight or partial shade conditions.

You'll find this species thriving in upland prairies, savannas, pine barrens, clearings, embankments, and any areas with rocky or sandy soils.



Figure 14. Sweet Fern Plant in a Pine Barren. *Photo Credit: Holly Bushman.*

Interesting Fact:

This species is considered a pioneer species. Meaning it thrives in areas that have been disturbed which often contain infertile soils. They can be some of the first species to inhabit disturbed sites.

Disturbance can occur from natural sources such as fire or manmade sources such as clear cutting.

Non-Native Plant

Common Motherwort (*Leonurus cardiaca*)



Figure 15. Common Motherwort Leaves. Photo Credit: Holly Bushman.

Common Motherwort, is a perennial, that is a part of the Lamiaceae (Mint) family. This species is native to Eurasia and was introduced into the United States due to its medicinal and herbal characteristics.

Common Motherwort grows anywhere from 2 to 5 feet tall. This species has a squarish stem and contains numerous tiny hairs. The leaves of Common Motherwort are distinctive in that they have three lobes that have toothed leaf edges with well-defined veins. The leaves are arranged opposite on the stem and gradually become smaller as you go up the stem.

The inflorescence (flower head) consists of small tubular flowers that are whorled along the stem and contain numerous hairs. The flowering season for this species is typically June through August and produces flowers that are pink to lavender in color.



Figure 16. Common Motherwort inflorescence. Photo Credit: Minnesota Wildflowers-Peter M. Dziuk 2004.

Common Motherwort has a rhizomious root system that allows it to spread rapidly. This species prefers partial sun to full sun areas and mesic soil conditions. This species does not do well in drought or in the heat.

You'll find this species thriving within edges woodland areas and wetlands, fields, and any disturbed sites.

Management to remove this species includes frequent hand pulling, cutting, or mowing.



Figure 17. Common Motherwort on fringe of wetland. Photo Credit: Holly Bushman.

Contact Information

Environmental Services Department

Planning & Zoning, Feedlots, Solid Waste, & Septic

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Todd Piepho-Area Hydrologist

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Jeff Flory-Aquatic Invasive Species Specialist

Email: Jeffrey.Flory@state.mn.us Phone: 507-910-9801



To see which DNR staff is the Area Hydrologist for your region, please click on the following link:

https://files.dnr.state.mn.us/waters/area_hydros.pdf