

THE COMMON ARROWHEAD

BY TERRY BONACE, ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION GROUP

The wetlands of Beverly Shores are a rich source of plant (and animal) diversity. With both the National Park and Shirley Heinze Land Trust removing invasive species like Phragmites and reed canary grass, many interesting native plants become evident.

Early in the summer, masses of glossy leaves of common arrowhead (*Sagittaria latifolia*), some as tall as 4 feet, appear in shallow water. You might watch these handsome leaves (with the shape of an arrowhead, naturally) much of the summer and think that they never produce any flowers. But when you have given up hope in August or September, spikes of three-petaled white flowers emerge from the shallow water. The male, pollen-bearing flowers occur at the upper part of the spike, while the female flowers which produce the bur-like fruit appear along the lower part of the spike.

Also going by the name of duck potato or wapato, arrowhead produces edible, egg-shaped “potatoes” below ground. These golf-ball sized tubers were a common starchy food source for native Americans. Before eating, they require cooking by boiling or baking. Both the seeds and tubers provide food for waterfowl and other animals.

The Environmental Restoration Group (ERG) will be glad to help you identify common arrowhead and other plants. Don't hesitate to contact Terry Bonace (tbonace@gmail.com), Candice Smith (candicepetersonsmith@gmail.com), or Bill Schaudt (blschaudt2@gmail.com) for assistance. Also please visit our website at www.bserg.org for further information on native plants, invasive plants and native replacements.



Arrowhead leaf



Arrowhead flower