



# AMERICAN WATER-WILLOW

## Species at Risk

In Canada, the American Water-willow (*Justicia americana*) is found at the northern edge of its range in southern Quebec, along the St. Lawrence River near Montreal and Lac Saint-Pierre and in southwestern Ontario along the northern shore of Lake Erie. The American Water-willow is a threatened species and is at risk of becoming endangered.

The American Water-willow is an aquatic plant that is 20 cm to 1 m in height and grows in groups. The leaves are smooth and slender and grow in opposite pairs. The flowers of the American Water-willow are white or light purple in colour and are opposite from the base of larger leaves. The fruit pods are approximately 1.5 cm in length and releases 2 to 4 beige kidney-shaped seeds upon maturity.

The American Water-willow is found along calm shores of shallow lakes, streams and rivers. This species will grow in water depths of 15 cm to 1.2 metres. The roots of the American Water-willow are found below the ground water level, even during periods of low water levels.

Human influences are a major threat affecting American Water-willow. Threats include water's edge development, infilling of suitable habitats, modification of river and lakebeds, increased erosion, changes in water quality and trampling and removal of plants. Invasive species such as Purple loosestrife and non-native *Phragmites* are encroaching into American Water-willow habitat.

It is illegal to search for, harass or capture a species at risk or destroy their habitat.  
Pictures courtesy of Rob Tervo

References: Parks Canada Status Report on the American Water-Willow in Canada, 2006

