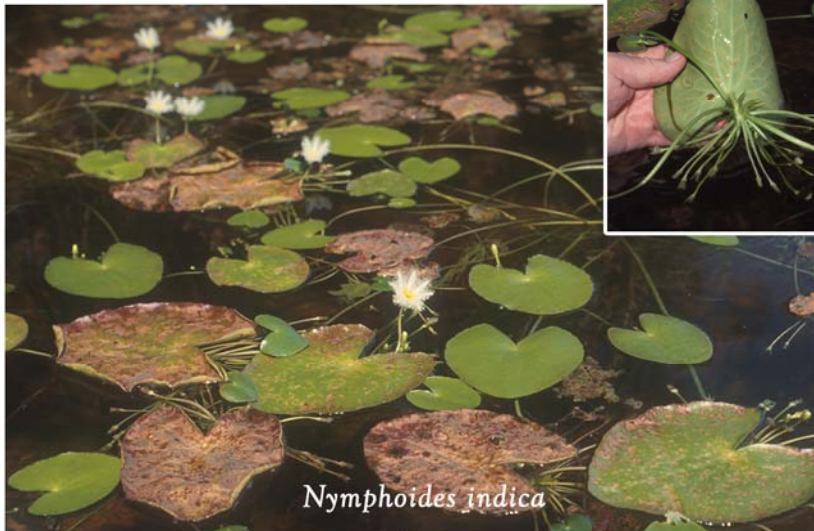


# Florida's floating-hearts

## Know *Nymphoides*

Floating-hearts (*Nymphoides*) are an attractive group of water plants with heart-shaped leaves and small, airy flowers. Two species are native to Florida; one frequent throughout the state, the other found only in the Panhandle. Unfortunately, two weedy, introduced floating-hearts are spreading in peninsular Florida. Know these *Nymphoides* with the photos below and the key to their identification on the reverse page.

*Nymphoides* grow rooted in quiet waters. The leaves resemble those of water lilies (*Nymphaea*). However *Nymphoides* have rounded, not angled, leaf bases and produce smaller flowers that are carried above the water surface on slender stalks. *Nymphoides* species generally look alike, having olive-green leaves, prominent leaf veins and thick root bunches suspended below the flower stalks. Their leaves may be mottled with purple above and pebbled in texture below. Flowers are essential to identify the various species.



*Nymphoides indica* is widely distributed through the world tropics where especially large plants often occur in great abundance. Leaves are almost as broad as they are long, thick, fleshy, and colored green underneath. Flowers may be white or yellow. Petals are furry and range in number from 4 to 8.






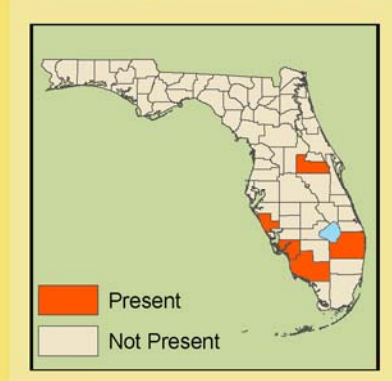
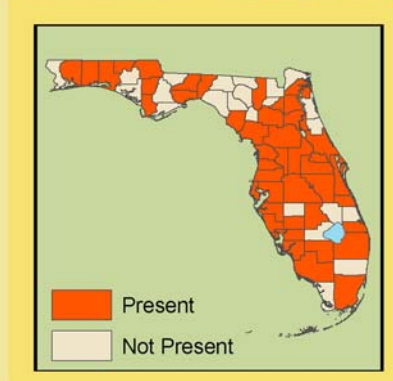

*Nymphoides cristata* produces a lavish display of ruffled, crested flowers. Its leaves are relatively thin and highly pigmented, especially underneath. Like other floating-hearts, *N. cristata* spreads by stout clusters of suspended roots that detach from the stem, float through aquatic systems, and sink to form new plants.





# LOOK INSIDE THE FLOWERS ... to separate the introduced floating-hearts from the Florida natives ...

- 1. Flowers densely covered with hair on the inner surface; flowers 2.5 - 3.7 cm wide . . . . . *Nymphoides indica*
- 1. Flowers without hair (excepting a few radiating from center); flowers 0.75 - 2.4 cm wide . . . . . (2)
- 2. Petals bearing a ruffled crest (like a rooster's comb) down the center . . . . . *Nymphoides cristata*
- 2. Petals without a median, ruffled crest . . . . . (3)
- 3. Leaf undersurface rough, veins prominent; leaves to 15 cm long; plants larger, sturdy . . . . . *Nymphoides aquatica*
- 3. Leaf undersurface smooth; leaves to only 7 cm long; plants smaller, delicate . . . . . *Nymphoides cordata*

<p><i>Nymphoides indica</i> Water snowflake INTRODUCED</p>	<p><i>Nymphoides cristata</i> Crested floating-heart INTRODUCED</p>	<p><i>Nymphoides aquatica</i> Big floating-heart NATIVE</p>	<p><i>Nymphoides cordata</i> Little floating-heart NATIVE</p>
			
 <p>Present Not Present</p>	 <p>Present Not Present</p>	 <p>Present Not Present</p>	 <p>Present Not Present</p>

*Nymphoides indica* is known from limited, scattered introductions in Florida. First recorded at the Braden River, Manatee Co. in 1983, it has since appeared at a natural wetland in Osceola Co. and a Lee Co. pond.

Abundant populations of *Nymphoides cristata* are increasing in distribution. Early introductions included a Lee Co. cypress swamp in 1997. South Florida canal systems and a central Florida lake (Orange Co.) have since been invaded.

*Nymphoides aquatica* ranges naturally through much of Florida, and the South, where it flowers from spring through fall. Although the petal margins are ruffled, its inner surface is unadorned.

Drought conditions kept *Nymphoides cordata* hard to find this spring in its Panhandle range. Florida is the southern extent of its native easterly distribution, which stretches north to Maine.