

# SPATTERDOCK

Visit Caddo Lake in late spring and you are likely to see large stands of floating plants with bright yellow flowers. This is spatterdock (*Nuphar polysepala*), one of Caddo's most characteristic and valuable native plants. Native to both North America and Eurasia and a member of the Nymphaeaceae family, it is also known as yellow pond lily or cow lily.



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## HABITAT

Spatterdock grows in shallow wetland areas with muddy bottoms. It is usually found in areas with one to five feet of water and prefers quiet backwater that is protected from strong current and wind. Its roots are fixed into the ground and its floating leaves are attached by long, stout stems. Spatterdock spreads by growth of its large fleshy roots, but will also grow from fragments of roots if the plant is broken up. The roots can actually be up to six inches in diameter and many feet long.



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## IDENTIFYING SPATTERDOCK

Spatterdock's large leaves have a slit that makes them roughly heart-shaped with wavy margins. The leaves are 8 to 16 inches long by 10 inches wide and can float on the surface or stand above it on thick round stalks. In early spring, the spatterdock's leaves are below the surface, light green in color, and look like lettuce growing on the lake bottom. By late spring, the broad, dark green leaves float on the water's surface or stand above the water as the summer progresses. The cup-shaped, bright yellow flowers bloom from June to mid-August. The flower emits a strong brandy-like odor which attracts pollinating insects and the greenish or yellowish fruits are oval with a flat top.

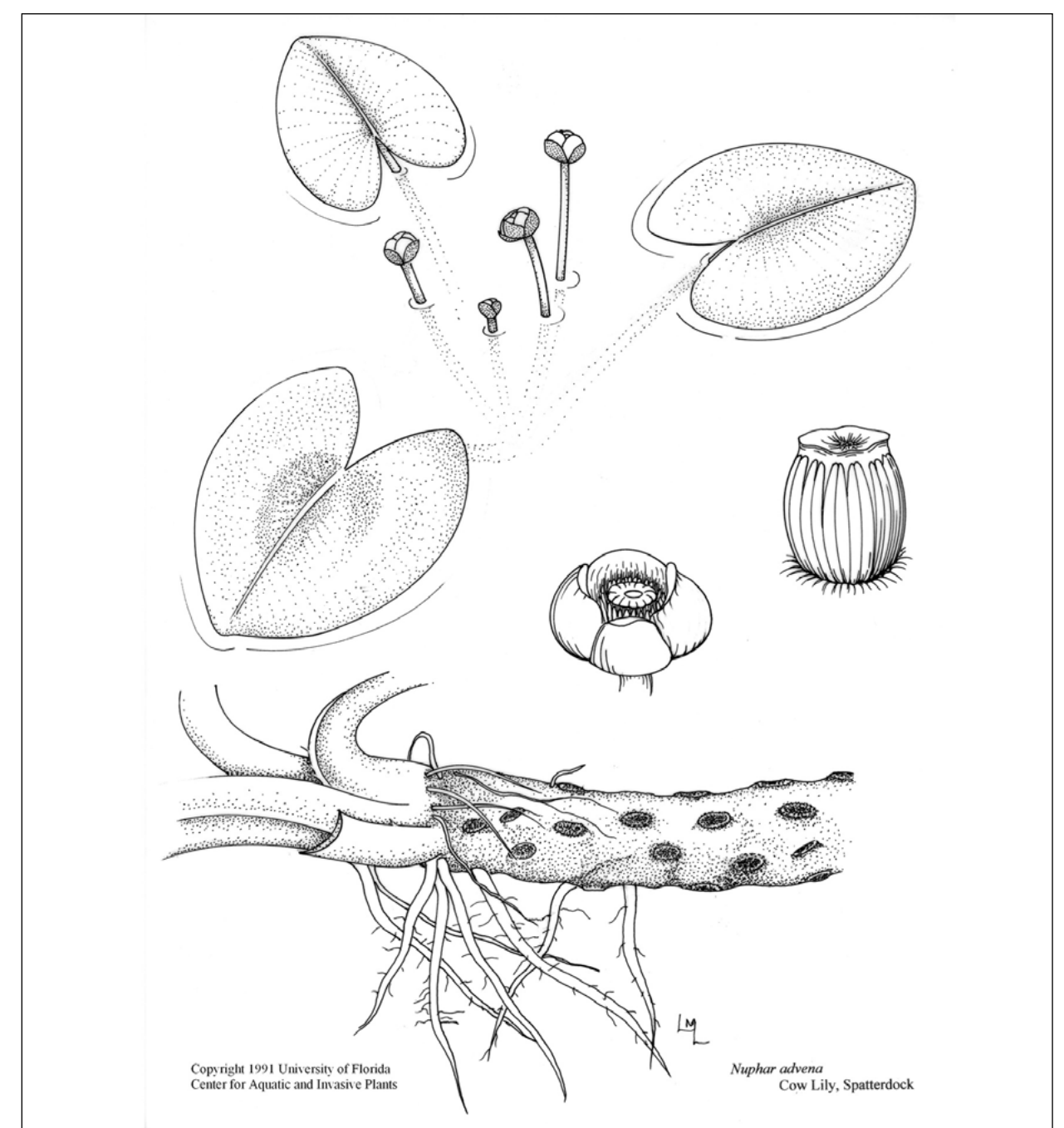


ILLUSTRATION BY CENTER FOR AQUATIC AND INVASIVE PLANTS, UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA / IFAS



Spatterdock in Smith Slough, Caddo Lake—PATRICK IRELAND/TEXAS A&M CENTER FOR INVASIVE SPECIES ERADICATION

## SPATTERDOCK IN THE CADDO LAKE ECOSYSTEM

Spatterdock is a valuable plant for fish and wildlife in Caddo Lake. Submerged portions of the plant and its large leaves provide shade, hiding places from predators, and habitat for many micro and macro invertebrates. These invertebrates in turn are used as food by fish and other wildlife species including reptiles, amphibians, and ducks. Spatterdock itself is an important food source for a variety of wildlife. The seeds are eaten by ducks and other waterfowl and beaver and nutria will eat the roots. Deer have also been known to graze the flowers and leaves. The decomposition of spatterdock by bacteria and fungi after it dies provides food (called "detritus") for many aquatic invertebrates.