

## January 2013 *Guess that Plant*



### ***Brasenia schreberi* Gmel., Water-shield**

The January *Guess that Plant* was one of New Jersey's unusual aquatic plants. The floating leaves of the water-shield are quite distinct and no other floating leaf species has a similar small peltate stem. The peltate arrangement provides a center of leaf support with leaf tissue radiating out from this center point. Other species with floating leaves, such as *Nuphar lutea* or *Nymphae odorata* have split leaves. Only the yellow water lotus, *Nelumbo lutea*, has a similar peltate leaf arrangement. The lotus however is elevated above the water and has a leaf that is up to a meter wide, unlike the diminutive water-shield's 2-10 cm size. Another interesting characteristic is the mucous covering that is found on the stems, flower buds and leaf undersides. Once you feel this you'll be able to identify this plant with your eyes closed!

*Brasenia* is wide spread in New Jersey with records for lakes, ponds and dammed stream in most of our 21 counties. It is readily observable for those in Ocean County in the Stafford Forge Fish and Wildlife Management Area's old cranberry bogs. Here it is co-mingled with *Nuphar* and *Nymphae* so as to provide a quick and easy comparison of size and form for those not familiar with this unique aquatic species.