

# Hydrilla Alert !

**Name :** Hydrilla verticillata, water thyme

**Common Uses :** Aquarium foliage

**Hydrilla is an exotic, perennial herb that is quickly invading American waterways. Once established in a body of water this weed is almost impossible to remove, and control measures are costly and time-consuming. Help us stop this invasion before it reaches New York State.**

**New Introduction :** Initially, Hydrilla entered Florida's inland waters after plants were discarded or planted into canals in the 1950's. Hydrilla is introduced to new waters as broken fragments on recreational boats from infested water to an uncontaminated body of water.

**Hydrilla is adapted to thrive in water with all types of chemical, nutrient and light ranges.**

## Negative Impacts :

- Hydrilla invades deep, dark waters; growing aggressively. Masses of plants form thick mats on the surface waters and block sunlight, killing the native species that need the light.
- Hydrilla infestation decreases dissolved oxygen levels, and kills fish.
- Plant infestation reduces the size and weight of certain sportfish.
- Heavy growth of Hydrilla on the water surface obstructs boating, swimming and fishing; and blocks intakes for power generation facilities and agricultural irrigation.
- Infestations outcompete native plant species and clog open water, eliminating feeding areas for birds and spawning sites for fish.
- Property values are reduced because Hydrilla interferes with boating access and other types of water recreation.

## Want to help stop it?

### Here's what to look for...

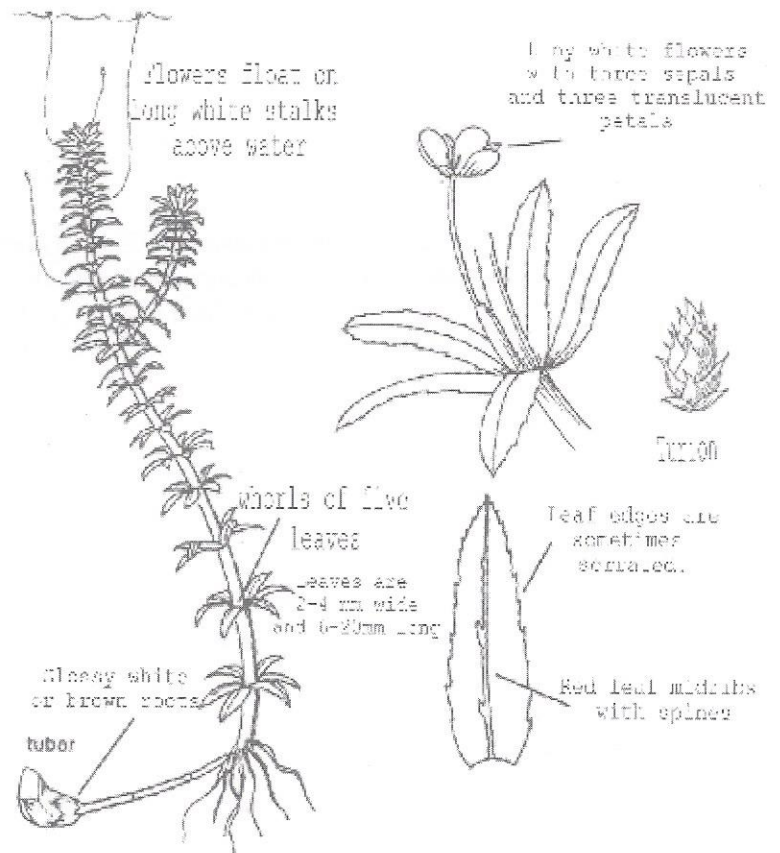
Hydrilla plants grow underwater in freshwater lakes, ponds, rivers and canals.

The plants root into the soil, but 70% of the plant stem floats on top of the water surface.

Stems can be as long as 25 feet.

Leaves are small and pointy in size, with 3-8 leaves originating from the same point on the stem.

The middle vein of the leaf is usually red, while the leaf edge is serrated and teethlike.



**Help Stop the Invasion of Hydrilla in Oswego County**

*Before it starts*

# Hydrilla is now found in most of southeastern United States and is approaching New York.

**Risk to New York Waterways :** No reports of infestation have occurred in New York State yet, but there still may be. In the Northeast, Hydrilla has been recently discovered in three sites in **Pennsylvania**; is common in old millponds throughout **Delaware**, and have been occurring in two ponds in the southeastern part of **Connecticut** for almost a decade.

## Once Its Here, Hydrilla is Going to Stay

Hydrilla survives at 50° north latitude, which is the equivalent of the US/ Canadian border in North America. Research suggests that Hydrilla is well adapted to the temperate climate because it can form tubers quickly during short winter days. Once Hydrilla plants root into Lake Ontario and NYS rivers we will not be able to rid ourselves of it.

## Don't be fooled by the myths.



A myth among sport fisherman is that Hydrilla benefits largemouth bass habitat. In the first few years of infestation, Hydrilla provides excellent cover for bass. The benefits don't last. In one year, Hydrilla can grow to cover ten times more surface water. The dense mat formed by Hydrilla halts boat access because the long, thick stems of Hydrilla will become tangled in the boat motor propellers. Hydrilla also outcompetes the native species that normally provide cover for the bass. Detrimental impacts by Hydrilla far outweigh any short-term beneficial impacts.

## Control Efforts :

- Mechanical harvesting and herbicide spraying are common control methods. Both are expensive and only moderately effective. Power weed cutters mow underwater weeds below the water surface and gather them onto a conveyor. The harvesting process is expensive, costing over \$1000 an acre in Florida and because of Hydrilla's rapid growth requires multiple harvests.
- Chemicals are easier to apply, but also costly. Herbicide spraying works best in small, enclosed bodies of water, and does not work at all in larger water bodies or in moving water. For those reasons, permits for chemical control are difficult to obtain in New York State.
- Biological control insects as part of a mix of efforts to control the weed problem is being tried in Florida. Adding an exotic species is a risky idea because new species can out-compete native species and cause an even larger problem.
- Controlling water levels is yet another effort to control the rampant growth of Hydrilla. Large-scale drawdowns have demonstrated that Hydrilla can be temporarily controlled. However, new plants grew from tuber roots that remained in the underwater soils. Drawdowns leave lake bottoms dry and interfere with fish populations and native plant species.

## The most effective control is the prevention of new Hydrilla infestations.

### Remember:

- ✓ Do not dump aquariums or their contents into rivers, lakes or canals.
- ✓ Clean off your boat, motor and trailer before leaving the marina. Dispose of plants in provided refuse containers.
- ✓ Inform other boaters or neighbors to be aware of hitchhiking plants when boating outside of New York State.

### For More Information:

Oswego County Environmental Management Council  
46 East Bridge Street  
Oswego, NY 13126  
(315) 349-8292

Oswego County Soil and Water Conservation District  
3105 State Route 3  
Fulton, NY 13069  
(315) 592 -9663