

# INVASIVE PLANT SPECIES FACT SHEET

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## Hydrilla (*Hydrilla verticillata*)

### DESCRIPTION

Hydrilla is a submersed herbaceous freshwater aquatic plant. Its rhizomes and stolons root in the substrate of ponds, lakes, canals, and slow moving rivers. The stems can grow up to 20 feet (6 m) in length. As the stems near the surface, they become many branched and spread horizontally. The leaves form in whorls of three to eight at nodes on the stem. There may be modified leaf buds, called turions, in the leaf axils. The turions break from the stem and can develop into a new plant. Tubers, which form at the ends of rhizomes, can also develop into new plants. Hydrilla closely resembles Eurasian Watermilfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*) and Brazilian waterweed (*Egeria densa*). Consult a natural resource specialist for positive identification.

### DISTRIBUTION

This aquatic plant is believed to originally be from Uganda and Tanzania.

Hydrilla was discovered in New England in 1989 in a small artificial pond in Stonington, Connecticut. Unfortunately, it went unreported until 1995 because it had been misidentified. That same year a second population was reported from a larger pond a few miles away. The ponds were either dredged or treated with herbicide.

In the spring of 2001 a third New England occurrence was discovered in Wilton, Connecticut. It was discovered in an artificial pond and reported to the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection. This pond has also been treated with herbicide.

### HABITATS & HABITS IN NEW ENGLAND

*Hydrilla verticillata* can be found in both still and running water. These habitats include lakes, rivers, reservoirs and ponds.



Hydrilla spreads very easily either by floating plant parts or the turions, which grow in the bottom of the pond, moving from one body of water to another.

It can grow at lower light levels than other aquatic plants. It has the ability to store extra phosphorous, and can survive a wide range of pH conditions. It can tolerate both acidic to basic, low nutrient to excessive nutrient, and fresh to brackish water.

### THREATS

Hydrilla is an aggressive aquatic plant that can physically crowd out and out-compete native water plants. *Hydrilla verticillata* forms dense, monotypic mats.



The plant's dense mats can clog boat propellers and impede navigation, shade and out-compete native

plants, clog water intakes, and remove oxygen from the water as dead plant matter decays. It alters the water quality by raising the pH, decreasing the oxygen and raising the temperature of its habitat. It also causes water to stagnate providing a good habitat for breeding mosquitoes. It is a significant impediment to fish habitat as well as water recreation.



*Hydrilla* in situ  
Stonington, CT  
June 21, 1996



*Hydrilla* in situ  
same spot  
**18 days later**

Its ability to grow very rapidly, combined with its multiple reproductive processes, provides the plant numerous methods of extending its range. It was reported as having spread along 500ha of the shoreline of the Potomac River in eight years. Currently, it has infested over 65,000 acres in Florida alone. The control and management of this plant in the South has cost millions of dollars. It is listed on the federal noxious weed list.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Washington Department of Ecology  
<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/plants/weeds/hydrilla.html>

General information

Nonindigenous Aquatic Species, Florida  
Caribbean Science Center

[http://nas.er.usgs.gov/plants/docs/hy\\_verti.html](http://nas.er.usgs.gov/plants/docs/hy_verti.html)

General information, maps and links

The PLANTS Database

[http://plants.usda.gov/cgi\\_bin/](http://plants.usda.gov/cgi_bin/)

General information and a map

Center for Aquatic and Invasive Plants,  
University of Florida

<http://plants.ifas.ufl.edu/seagrant/hydver2.html>

Extensive general information

Aquatic Plant Control Research Program, US  
Army Corps on Engineers

<http://www.wes.army.mil/el/aqua/apis/plants/html/hydrilla.html>

General information and a map

The Nature Conservancy

<http://tncweeds.ucdavis.edu/esadocs/documnts/hydrver.html>

Extensive descriptive and control information



This fact sheet was based on information provided by the Invasive Plant Atlas of New England (IPANE), available at

<http://webapps.lib.uconn.edu/ipane/browsing.cfm?descriptionid=22> and the USGS Nonindigenous Aquatic Species (N.A.S.) Program, available at

[http://nas.er.usgs.gov/plants/docs/hy\\_verti.html](http://nas.er.usgs.gov/plants/docs/hy_verti.html).

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