



Whatcom Weeds

Whatcom County Noxious Weed Control Board 322 N. Commercial St Bellingham WA 98225
(360) 778-6234 www.whatcomcounty.us/914/Weeds

HYDRILLA

Hydrilla verticillata

THREAT: Hydrilla is an aquatic plant native to Africa that grows in still or slow-moving fresh water. This plant grows rapidly and can reproduce through seeds, plant fragments, tubers and turions. These characteristics allow hydrilla to spread easily to new sites, which it can then quickly dominate. Aside from out-competing native vegetation, this plant can clog waterways and municipal water systems, interfering with irrigation, recreational activities and ecosystem function. Additionally, hydrilla is quite adaptable, tolerating low light levels, a wide range of water depths and temperatures, and a high level of suspended sediments. Hydrilla is considered one of the worst aquatic weeds in the United States, causing greater problems than Eurasian milfoil. This weed can be spread by water, boats, trailers, fishing gear, birds and by dumping aquarium plants in waterways.

DESCRIPTION: Hydrilla is a submersed aquatic plant that is rooted in the sediment. It is similar to other aquatic plants, the main distinguishing characteristic being the tubers that form along the roots. These tubers resemble very small potatoes and are $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch long. Hydrilla roots in the substrate and grows up to the surface of the water, the stems growing up to 30 feet long. The stems branch near the surface and spread horizontally. The leaves are about $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ inch long and are usually grouped in whorls of five around the stem. The leaves also have saw tooth edges, giving the plant a rough, rasp-like feel when pulled through the hands. Turions, small hard buds, can form on the stem and each of these can form a new plant. Flowers are very small, with six petals.



MANAGEMENT OPTIONS: Like all aquatic weeds, control is difficult and eradication may be unrealistic. To prevent the spread of any such plants, trailers, boats and fishing gear should be carefully inspected to avoid transporting plant materials between water bodies. Aquarium plants should never be discarded in sewer systems or water bodies. Accurate identification of hydrilla is essential before control work can begin, as it resembles other aquatic plants. Control efforts can include chemical, biological and mechanical measures. Mechanical harvesting or cutting can temporarily open clogged areas of water but the plant fragments must be contained to prevent the formation of new plants. Grass carp readily eat hydrilla plants (not the tubers), but may become a pest themselves. Herbicides can be used to kill the vegetative parts of the plant but, also, do not affect the tubers.