

AQUATIC INVADERS

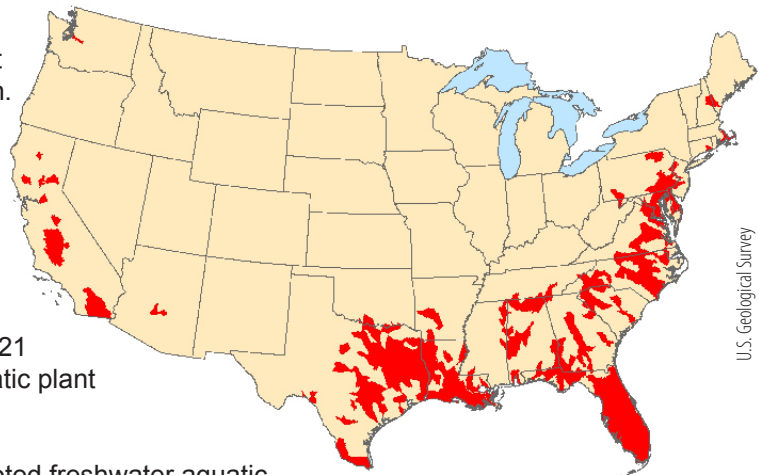


COMMON NAME: Hydrilla

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Hydrilla verticillata* (Linnaeus 1758; Royle, 1839)

NATIVE DISTRIBUTION: Africa, southern Asia, and possibly Australia.

U.S distribution: *Hydrilla verticillata* is present from Florida to Connecticut and west to California and Washington. First introduced to the United States in the early 1950s for use in aquariums it entered Florida's inland water system after plants were discarded or planted into canals in Tampa and in Miami. Presently, the species has been recorded from over 690 water bodies within 190 drainage basins of 21 states and is the most abundant aquatic plant in Florida public waters.



Habitat: Hydrilla is a submerged, rooted freshwater aquatic plant, surviving in depths from 0 to 20 feet. It is found in a variety of climatic conditions, in lakes, rivers and streams. When established, Hydrilla often forms thick intertwined mats that fill the entire water column and exclude other plants.

Life cycle: Hydrilla is a vascular, perennial plant. The plant reproduces and spreads by forming turions and tubers. Turions are buds attached to the leaves that break off and float away to form new plants. Tubers are small underground buds which develop into plants. Detached fragments of roots and stems can also take root in new areas. Finally, viable plants can also sprout from seed.

Cool facts:

- Under good growing conditions, Hydrilla has been reported to grow up to 8 feet in one day.
- Hydrilla stands can become so thick that ducks and other birds can walk on top of them on the surface of the water.
- Underground tubers can stay viable for up to 10 years.
- Serrated pointy green leaves grow in whorls (spirals) of 4 to 8 around a stem that can reach 25 feet in length.

Pathways of invasion: Aquarium releases, water garden flooding, and recreational boating activities.

Impacts: Hydrilla reproduces amazingly fast, outcompeting native aquatic plants by forming dense stands that often fill the water column down to 20 feet. The decomposition of plant material in these dense stands causes reductions in the dissolved oxygen content of water. The degradation of habitat and alterations in the trophic (food chain) structure of the ecosystem often reduces fish growth rates and numbers.

Dense stands impede navigation, dramatically reduce recreational opportunities and tourism, and often block irrigation canals by dramatically slowing the flow of water. Hydrilla can also interfere with hydroelectricity, by clogging intake pipes and filters, causing millions of dollars worth of damage at individual hydroelectric facilities.

Ways to prevent its spread:

- Never release any non-native organism into the environment.
- Preventing the transport of Hydrilla from infested waters into uninfested waters is the most effective way for containing its spread. Learn to recognize Hydrilla. Good boat hygiene is critical – boats that have been washed with warm, soapy water or mild bleach are less likely to spread non-natives.
- Make sure that in the event of a flood, the plants from your water garden will not be washed in to adjacent aquatic environments. Water runs down hill!
- Report invasive species to local officials and the USGS online at <http://nas.er.usgs.gov/> or by calling 877-7867-267 (877-STOP-ANS).

These tips apply to ALL non-native species.

Don't forget: Use native ornamental plants, and clean your boat after each use.
